

COURT DECISION IS CLEAR: INVESTMENT IS NECESSARY TO ADDRESS ADEQUACY GAP

The Basic Education Funding Commission (BEFC) is a bipartisan group tasked with reviewing Pennsylvania's distribution of funding for basic education to its 500 school districts. The BEFC is currently holding hearings across the state to gather input from educators, parents, community members, and education policy experts.

On September 21, 2023, the BEFC held a hearing in Lancaster, PA where State Senator Greg Rothman disputed one of the witnesses, saying, **"I disagree that the court case says we need to spend more money."**

This is an assertion being made not just by members of the BEFC, but by other legislators.

It is categorically false.

"The evidence demonstrates that low-wealth districts like Petitioner Districts, which struggle to raise enough revenue through local taxes to cover the greater needs of their students, lack the inputs that are essential elements of a thorough and efficient system of public education - adequate funding; courses, curricula, and other programs that prepare students to be college and career ready; sufficient, qualified, and effective staff; safe and adequate facilities; and modern, quality instrumentalities of learning." (p. 705)

HERE IS THE EVIDENCE FROM THE RULING:

- The Commonwealth Court ruled that Pennsylvania's current public education funding system is unconstitutional and requires additional resources for low-wealth school districts to ensure an equitable education. (ORDER p. 2)
- The court emphasizes the importance of financial resources in education, stating that economically-disadvantaged students can overcome challenges with access to the right resources. (p. 717-18)
- The decision points out that low-wealth districts lack sufficient resources and struggle to raise enough revenue through local taxes to adequately fund education. (p. 676, 705)
- The court's ruling establishes that funding is crucial for a thorough and efficient public education system, including courses, qualified staff, safe facilities, and modern resources.
- Various studies cited in the decision have recognized the need for increased funding in lower wealth districts, but the problem has not been resolved. (p 678)
- The court explicitly mandates increased investment to ensure every student receives an adequately funded education. (p. 608)
- The court ruling does not raise any concerns about misspending and waste; it affirms the testimony of educators that there simply are not enough funds to meet all students' needs. (p. 772/774)

The court decision in the school funding lawsuit makes it clear that the state must invest more money in public schools to address the adequacy gap. While discussing how money is allocated and spent is significant, it is essential to have a basic understanding of the lawsuit decision as a starting point.