

Legislation Text

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Calling upon the Pennsylvania General Assembly to end the unconstitutional race and wealth disparities in school funding and to fully, adequately, and fairly fund its schools in Philadelphia and across the Commonwealth by utilizing the state's Fair Funding formula as the basis of all K-12 education funding and providing adequate recurring state funding.

WHEREAS, Racial inequity and funding inadequacy define Pennsylvania's school funding system; and

WHEREAS, Pennsylvania is home to six of America's 50 most starkly segregated school district borders, which separate wealthy, predominantly white districts from under-resourced schools that serve their mostly non-white neighbors; and

WHEREAS, Pennsylvania ranks 45th in the nation in terms of state-contributed funding to schools, and predominantly Black, Brown and immigrant districts suffer the most. According to POWER Interfaith, Pennsylvania schools with the fewest white students receive on average \$2,000 less per pupil in state funding than their fair share, and schools in districts with the highest proportion of white students receive on average \$2,000 more per pupil than their fair share; and

WHEREAS, The current level of education funding in the vast majority of school districts across Pennsylvania is inadequate to provide the education our students deserve. By Pennsylvania's own analysis, school districts across the state are approximately \$4.6 billion short of adequate funding. 277 districts need \$2,000 or more per student to meet young people's learning needs, including Philadelphia which needs an additional \$5,500 per pupil or \$1.1 billion additional recurring dollars to reach the minimum funding level identified by the state as adequate; and

WHEREAS, Approximately 11 percent of the state education budget now runs through Pennsylvania's Fair Funding formula which was enacted in 2016; however, vast disparities continue to exist by race and class. For example, the School District of Philadelphia spent a total of \$16,444 per pupil in the 2019-20 school year, compared to \$26,983 in the neighboring Lower Merion School District. When accounting for the differing needs of students in poverty and students learning English, the School District of Philadelphia spends \$10,235 per weighted student, compared to \$26,734 in Lower Merion. According to the 2016-17 data from the National Center for Education Statistics, Pennsylvania's gap in spending between the poorest and wealthiest districts is the largest in the country; and

WHEREAS, This inadequacy and inequity is the basis of the 2014 Pennsylvania fair funding lawsuit, *William Penn School District vs. PA Department of Education*, which could force the state legislature to remediate school funding inequity. This case is currently scheduled to be heard in the Commonwealth Court this September; and

WHEREAS, Fully allocating the state's Basic Education Funding via the Fair Funding formula would help eliminate significant, annual racial disparities in funding at the state level and help ensure that Black and Brown students across the Commonwealth are provided their fair share of state education resources; and

WHEREAS, Governor Wolf's 2021 State Budget Proposal would distribute all of Pennsylvania's current K-12 Basic Education Funding through the Fair Funding formula and would also provide enough supplemental funding to ensure that no district would experience a decrease in funding; and

WHEREAS, Should Governor Wolf's proposal be fully enacted, the School District of Philadelphia would receive an additional \$261 million in Basic Education Funding and an additional \$31 million in Special Education Funding compared to the 2019-20 school year, representing an over 20% increase in those funding streams; and

WHEREAS, Organizations and ordinary citizens in Philadelphia and across the state have organized for decades around fair funding. Faith-based groups such as POWER and others; nonprofits such as Public Citizens for Children and Youth, the Education Law Center, the Public Interest Law Center, Pennsylvanians for Fair Funding, and others; and many districts and school boards, as well as the Pennsylvania School Boards Association, have all advocated for fair funding. Incredible efforts have been made to demand change through countless policy conversations and other advocacy events across the state; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Calls upon the Pennsylvania General Assembly to end the unconstitutional race and wealth disparities in school funding and to fully, adequately, and fairly fund its schools in Philadelphia and across the Commonwealth by utilizing the state's Fair Funding formula as the basis of all K-12 education funding and providing adequate recurring state funding.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That additional work will be needed to eliminate the remaining racial disparity in education funding overall.

FURTHER RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Will encourage others, including parents, students, district taxpayers, to contact the Pennsylvania General Assembly to convey the importance of enacting fully equitable and adequate state education funding.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution will be submitted to the elected senators and representatives of the City of Philadelphia in the General Assembly and to the Governor of Pennsylvania.