

Legislation Text

File #: 140913, **Version:** 0

Supporting the clients and their lawyers, the Public Interest Law Center of Philadelphia and the Education Law Center - Pennsylvania, in their suit to enforce Pennsylvania's constitutional guarantee of "a thorough and efficient system of public education," and urging the Pennsylvania General Assembly to provide a fair and predictable formula funded by adequate revenues that reflects the Commonwealth's values.

WHEREAS, Section Fourteen of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania states that "The General Assembly shall provide for the maintenance and support of a thorough and efficient system of public education to serve the needs of the Commonwealth"; and

WHEREAS, In recognition of this core responsibility, in 2008 the General Assembly established funding targets for each school district, and determined a formula that would allow the Commonwealth to distribute education funds in a way that took into account the specific needs of our state's school districts and their students, to ensure that all students were given the resources needed to succeed academically according to state-mandated standards; and

WHEREAS, In 2011 the state of Pennsylvania reversed progress towards equity in education funding, drastically cutting funding to school districts by over \$860 million, and limiting the ability of local communities to compensate for lost funds; and

WHEREAS, Pennsylvania is one of only three states in the United States of America without an objective formula to distribute education funding; and

WHEREAS, This irrational and inadequate funding structure has wreaked havoc on school districts across Pennsylvania and had a devastating impact on students, who have been deprived of integral elements of their education, such as appropriate class sizes, adequate facilities, experienced and effective teachers, nurses, counselors, administrative and support staff, and adequate course offerings and materials; and

WHEREAS, These adverse effects can be acutely felt here in Philadelphia, which has been forced to adopt "Doomsday Budgets," increase class sizes, close schools, and eliminate thousands of teaching and support staff positions; and

WHEREAS, On November 10, 2014 the Public Interest Law Center of Philadelphia, the Education Law Center - Pennsylvania, and pro bono counsel O'Melveny & Myers filed a suit in Commonwealth Court on behalf of six Pennsylvania school districts, seven parents, the Pennsylvania Association of Rural and Small Schools, and the NAACP Pennsylvania State Conference against legislative leaders, state education officials, and the Governor, to compel the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to provide the resources necessary to provide the constitutionally-mandated "thorough and efficient system of public education"; and

WHEREAS, The group of school districts represented in this suit include: William Penn School District in Delaware County; Panther Valley School District in Carbon County; The School District of Lancaster in Lancaster County; Greater Johnstown School District in Cambria County; Wilkes-Barre Area School District in

Luzerne County; and Shenandoah Valley School District in Schuylkill County, and these districts are joined by parents of children enrolled in the School District of Philadelphia; and

WHEREAS, These school districts serve diverse populations with a large number of economically disadvantaged families, while drawing from some of the state's weakest tax bases; and

WHEREAS, The children whose parents have filed on their behalf have had their education directly impacted by the inadequate funding, leaving them struggling in schools that cannot provide adequate assistance for their needs, including special education and language access for English language learners; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the Council of the City of Philadelphia supports the clients and their lawyers, Public Interest Law Center of Philadelphia and the Education Law Center - Pennsylvania in their suit to enforce Pennsylvania's constitutional guarantee of "a thorough and efficient system of public education," and urges the Pennsylvania General Assembly to provide a fair and predictable formula funded by adequate revenues that reflects the Commonwealth's values.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to Governor Thomas Corbett, Secretary Carolyn Dumesque, Senator Joseph B. Scarnati, Senator Dominic Pileggi, Speaker Samuel Smith, the members of the Pennsylvania Senate's and House of Representative's Education Committees, and the members of Philadelphia's Senate and House Delegations.