

Pennsylvania School Funding Campaign

Successful Schools... Successful Children... Successful Communities

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Schools Start New Year Without State Funding ***School Leaders Ask State to Get Budget Done, But Get It Done Right***

Harrisburg (August 26, 2009) – Local school leaders joined with the Pennsylvania School Funding Campaign (PSFC) at the State Capitol today to discuss the impact of the state budget impasse and missed state funding on school districts, and to tell legislators that school districts need a state budget – but, more important, they need the right state budget, one that recognizes and meets the needs of public schools to serve our children and thereby the Commonwealth's future.

Schools across the state start opening this week and next, but the joy of a new beginning for 1.8 million Pennsylvania students is tinged with program and staff cutbacks, economic uncertainty about the year ahead, and fears that state support for public education is waning, according to the PSFC.

School districts will miss their second monthly state subsidy payment due tomorrow because of the state budget stalemate. Between that and the missed payment last month, districts will now be out almost \$1.3 billion. School districts receive monthly subsidy payments from the state, known as unipay, on the last Thursday of every month. The payment includes state funding for special education, transportation, vocational education, debt service for construction and the single largest allocation of state support – basic education.

“That's \$1.3 billion that could have been put to work hiring teachers to create and expand programs for our children, \$1.3 billion that would have meant the difference between cutting programs and keeping them, \$1.3 billion that would not have to be made up by school districts scrambling to find other sources of income to help keep them afloat,” said Fred Botterbusch, School Director in the Dallastown Area School District and President of the Pennsylvania School Boards Association (PSBA).

Dr. Richard Fry, Superintendent of the Big Spring School District and member of the Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators (PASA) Legislative Committee, said his district anticipates having to borrow funds to meet payroll due to the delay in state funding.

“I am not anxious to move forward with such borrowing, but, more importantly, I can't imagine having to live with a budget agreement that does not support adequate and equitable funding for all of Pennsylvania's public schools,” said Fry. “Though tomorrow represents the second missed subsidy payment, the dire concern is not the challenges this lack of subsidy creates for us now, but the devastating consequences that a budget not focused on adequate and equitable funding would create for all districts throughout the state for this year and in the future.”

Laura Cowburn, Assistant to the Superintendent for Business Services/Board Secretary in the Columbia Borough School District and President of the Pennsylvania Association of School Business Officials (PASBO), said the organizations represented at the Capitol today are asking

the state to be a partner in the shared responsibility for student achievement. “We are not just seeking a payday or a payoff,” said Cowburn. “We want a partner that puts its money where the mandates are for accountability and success of our students. We want a partner that understands adequately funding our schools is not just a local responsibility.”

The Pennsylvania School Funding Campaign calls on the Governor and members of the General Assembly to act promptly to pass a budget – not just any budget, but one that upholds their constitutional responsibility to public education, supports the increase in basic education funding needed to achieve the Year 2 funding targets of the six-year plan to fully implement the new school funding formula, and avoids cutting the state’s own commitment to the basic education subsidy.

The PSFC is a statewide coalition of individuals and organizations representing hundreds of thousands of parents, students, educators, school board members, administrators and other concerned citizens advocating for adequate and equitable funding of Pennsylvania’s public schools. For more information about the Campaign, visit www.paschoolfunding.org.