

# *Pennsylvania School Funding Campaign*

## *Successful Schools...Successful Children...Successful Communities*

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **SENATE COMMITTEE SLASHES SCHOOL FUNDING** ***Budget Bill Moved in Appropriations Committee Ignores Costing Out Study***

(HARRISBURG), June 17, 2008 - The Senate Appropriations Committee voted along party lines yesterday to move a budget bill that slashes the Governor's proposed basic education funding increase by 41%. The bill, which reduced proposed basic education funding by \$118 million, failed to use the Costing-Out Study the General Assembly mandated and spent state tax dollars to fund. The study was designed to determine the true cost of educating every Pennsylvania child to meet state academic standards.

In recent days Senate Republican leaders have stated that they think a permanent formula and a six-year implementation plan are not realistic because future governors and legislators will want to tinker with it.

Concern that a future governor or legislature may want to make changes is not an excuse for today's legislators and their leaders to ignore their responsibility to fix a serious problem now, said Ron Cowell, president of the Education Policy and Leadership Center. "Today's high school seniors were newborns the last time we had a rational funding formula. Years of tinkering rather than serious attention is why the Costing-Out Study found a gaping hole in school funding. The time has come to fix this problem and stop playing around the edges. The Pennsylvania School Funding Campaign urges the legislature to follow the Governor's lead and get down to the business of permanently fixing school funding in Pennsylvania."

The Costing-Out Study found that Pennsylvania is under-funding basic education by more than \$4 billion. The study confirmed that Pennsylvania's education system relies too heavily on local property taxes to support our schools, causing widespread inequities in educational opportunities for our children.

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The Senate's action yesterday sends us down the same pathway we have been on before. The predictable outcome will be increasing property taxes and disparate education opportunities for children around the state, said Joan Benso, president and CEO of Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children. "There is no more important priority this spring than for the Pennsylvania General Assembly to enact a permanent school funding formula and fully fund it with at least \$2.6 billion in additional state funds in no more than six years."

Pennsylvania voters clearly feel the time has come to change how we fund public education. According to a 2007 Center for Opinion Research Survey, 85% of Pennsylvanians support increasing the state share of education funding.

"School employees throughout the state see the impact of underfunded classrooms every day," Pennsylvania State Education Association President James Testerman said. "In spite of overcrowded classrooms, the lack of up-to-date textbooks, inadequate supplies and run-down buildings, they never give up trying to help students achieve. The General Assembly has a real opportunity to fix this problem and help our children. It cannot let that opportunity slip away."

The Pennsylvania School Funding Campaign 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 comprehensive, systemic reform of Pennsylvania's public education funding system.

Visit the PA School Funding Campaign's web site at [www.paschoolfunding.org](http://www.paschoolfunding.org)

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