

## ELC Testimony to City Council on School Funding

5/27/15

Good morning, Council President Clarke and members of City Council. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today on the topic of school funding.

My name is Ian Gavigan, and I am the Research and Policy Fellow at the Education Law Center of Pennsylvania.

The Education Law Center's mission is to ensure access to a quality public education for all children in Pennsylvania. For 40 years, we have advocated for the most vulnerable students -- children living in poverty, children of color, those in the foster care and juvenile justice systems, children with disabilities, English Language Learners, and those experiencing homelessness.

For years, Pennsylvania has failed to give our schools the resources they need to serve all students. We have been hard at work to change that. As leaders of the Campaign for Fair Education Funding, we are pushing the state to adopt and fund a fair funding formula based on actual student and district needs. And, along with our partners at the Public Interest Law Center, we have brought a major law suit against Pennsylvania for violating its state constitutional mandate to maintain a thorough and efficient system of public education.

The budget process is heating up and the budget for education is still an open question. It isn't clear what will happen, when it will happen, or how much the state will provide our city's struggling schools. What is clear is that the students in our city cannot depend on Harrisburg alone.

Meanwhile, the educational crisis facing our district is especially acute when you look at the most at-risk learners. Students with special needs, English language learners, and students living in poverty are concentrated in our city's neighborhood schools where funding cuts have decimated staff and gutted educational opportunities. **Only new and predictable funding will help these schools make up lost ground and begin to provide all the services their students need.**

Providing new dollars to Philadelphia's schools is one of the best investments we can make. Research shows that poor students educated in public schools that experience sustained, predictable investments grow up to have lower rates of poverty, higher educational attainment, and lower dependency on public supports throughout their lives. ELC's own research focusing on Pennsylvania has shown that investments in public schools have led to increased student outcomes on state exams. Investments in specific services lead to big payoffs; when students with special needs, English language learners, and students in poverty have access to libraries and librarians, for example, they see markedly higher results in reading and writing. Countless studies and common sense show: money matters.

We urge you to support Philadelphia's children—they cannot wait any longer.

Ian Gavigan  
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