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Pennsylvania's landmark school funding lawsuit heads back to court March 7 *Commonwealth Court to hear oral argument en banc in Philadelphia*

Philadelphia, Pa. - Pennsylvania Commonwealth Court will hear oral arguments next Wednesday in a landmark lawsuit challenging inequitable and inadequate school funding in Pennsylvania. Attorneys from the Education Law Center and the Public Interest Law Center will ask the Court to reject remaining preliminary objections and a motion to dismiss asserted by the legislature so that the case can proceed directly and promptly to trial.

The argument in *William Penn School District et al. v. PA Department of Education et al.* will be heard on Wednesday morning, March 7, in Courtroom 1 of Commonwealth Court on the 9th floor of the Widener Building, 1339 Chestnut Street. The court will convene at 9:30 a.m. The *William Penn* argument is one of a number of arguments the Court will hear that day and is likely to begin around 10:30. Seating in the courtroom is limited.

Petitioners in the case, which include seven families, six school districts from rural, urban and suburban areas, and statewide organizations, filed the lawsuit challenging Pennsylvania state officials for violating the state's constitution by failing to adequately and equitably fund public education. Since the Pennsylvania's Supreme Court's 2017 ruling that overturned an earlier dismissal by Commonwealth Court, two legislative leaders, Senator Scarnati and Representative Turzai, have tried to dismiss the case or further delay trial. Senator Scarnati argues that the case is moot, and Representative Turzai argues that petitioners have failed to state an equal protection claim, asserting that education is not an important or fundamental right.

"The right to education is an important right," said attorney Michael Churchill of the Public Interest Law Center. "The legislative leaders must stop trampling on that right and start respecting it. None of the objections presented to the Court have merit, and while they waste time, students' futures are at stake."

"Time is of the essence. Pennsylvania's school children are suffering due to the lack of state support," added Maura McInerney, legal director at the Education Law Center. "Every day the legislature delays fulfilling its constitutional obligation is a day in which hundreds of thousands of students across the Commonwealth remain in grossly underfunded schools. They need more resources right now, not years from now."

The lack of adequate state support for education in Pennsylvania is glaring. Pennsylvania ranks 47th out of 50 states, according to US census data, in the portion of education spending that is covered by state funds. Billions more dollars would be needed, according to [research conducted by the Public Interest Law Center](#), to ensure a "thorough and efficient" system of public education across the state, as required by the Pennsylvania Constitution.

While the state has implemented a new funding formula and provided small increases in education funding since the case was filed three years ago, these measures have done little to change the overall picture, with many Pennsylvania school districts still resource-starved and woefully far from adequate funding levels.

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The **Education Law Center-PA** (ELC) is a nonprofit, legal advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring that all children in Pennsylvania have access to a quality public education. Through legal representation, impact litigation, trainings, and policy advocacy, ELC advances the rights of vulnerable children, including children living in poverty, children of color, children in the foster care and juvenile justice systems, children with disabilities, English language learners, LGBTQ students, and children experiencing homelessness. For more information visit elc-pa.org/ or follow on Twitter @edlawcenterpa.

The **Public Interest Law Center** uses high-impact legal strategies to advance the civil, social, and economic rights of communities in the Philadelphia region facing discrimination, inequality, and poverty. We use litigation, community education, advocacy, and organizing to secure their access to fundamental resources and services in the areas of public education, housing, health care, employment, environmental justice and voting. For more information visit www.pubintlaw.org or follow on Twitter @PubIntLawCtr.