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## **Education Law Center Calls on Gov. Wolf to Propose Major Increase in Special Ed Funding**

*January 3, 2019* – Following its October [report](#), “Shortchanging Children with Disabilities: State Underfunding of Special Education in Pennsylvania,” the Education Law Center today wrote Gov. Tom Wolf, urging that his 2019-20 budget proposal include significant new investments supporting the education of students with disabilities.

Today’s letter from ELC (attached) calls for a \$400 million increase in state funding for basic education and a \$100 million increase in special education funding, to be distributed to districts through the existing funding formulas. These amounts have also been flagged by the statewide coalition [PA Schools Work](#) as necessary increases to address inadequacy and inequity in school funding across the state.

As ELC’s recent report emphasized, providing appropriate supports for students with disabilities to be educated in the least restrictive environment requires adequate levels of both basic and special education funding.

In addition, ELC’s letter to the governor urges him to propose increased funding to support a substantial expansion of early childhood education programs and infant, toddler, and preschool Early Intervention programs. Finally, it asks Gov. Wolf to call on the General Assembly to ensure that all public schools, including charter schools, receive tiered funding based on the needs of the students with disabilities that they serve, as in the special education funding formula.

Gov. Wolf is scheduled to give his annual budget address on Feb. 5. “In Gov. Wolf’s second term, the people of Pennsylvania expect him to deliver on his campaign promise to invest in education,” said ELC policy director Reynelle Brown Staley. “The best way for the governor to show his commitment to Pennsylvania’s students is to offer a budget that makes significant new investments in early intervention, pre-K, and both basic and special education services.”

Special education costs for Pennsylvania school districts increased by \$1.54 billion over an eight-year period from 2008 to 2016, while state support for those costs increased by only \$72 million, ELC’s report showed. This meant that the state’s share of funding for special education during that period declined from 32 percent to 23 percent, creating severe funding challenges for local school districts.

In October, after the release of the ELC report, 42 special education advocates statewide signed a letter (attached) to the governor, stating that for more than 270,000 students with disabilities across Pennsylvania, “significant additional investment is needed to address the widening gap between adequate and actual special education funding” and calling for annual increases of \$100 million in state funding for special education.

**The Education Law Center-PA** (ELC) is a nonprofit, legal advocacy organization with offices in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, 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 learners, LGBTQ students, and children experiencing homelessness. For more information, visit [elc-pa.org](http://elc-pa.org) or follow on Twitter [@edlawcenterpa](https://twitter.com/edlawcenterpa).