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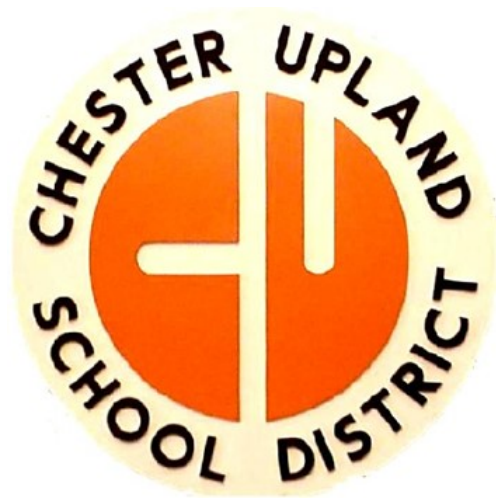
March 2020

Court Grants Our Petition to Intervene on Behalf of Chester Families

The Delaware County Court of Common Pleas on Feb. 24 granted our [petition to intervene](#) in *In Re: Appointment Of A Receiver For The Chester Upland School District*, giving Chester parents as well as advocates for students with disabilities a voice in plans for the future of that district.

ELC, along with Public Interest Law Center, filed the petition on behalf of parents of students in Chester Upland School District and the Delaware County Advocacy and Resource Organization, a nonprofit advocating for students with disabilities. We intervened to challenge a “revised financial recovery plan” that contemplates the conversion of all Chester Upland K-8 schools to charter schools.

At a planned hearing on March 3-4, ELC will present evidence that the plan fails to evaluate whether this conversion will improve or imperil students’ educations. The plan also ignores how the proposal will affect students with disabilities, though data shows that potential charter school options serve a far lower percentage of children with more significant disabilities. We hope our action will help shift the current proceedings toward a focus on the quality of education children will receive under any proposal.



Gov. Wolf's Budget: \$405M More for K-12 Classrooms

Gov. Wolf kicked off the 2020-21 budget process on Feb. 4 by offering a proposal that would increase K-12 classroom

I support



a \$405M investment

in PA public schools in 2020.

#PASchoolsWork

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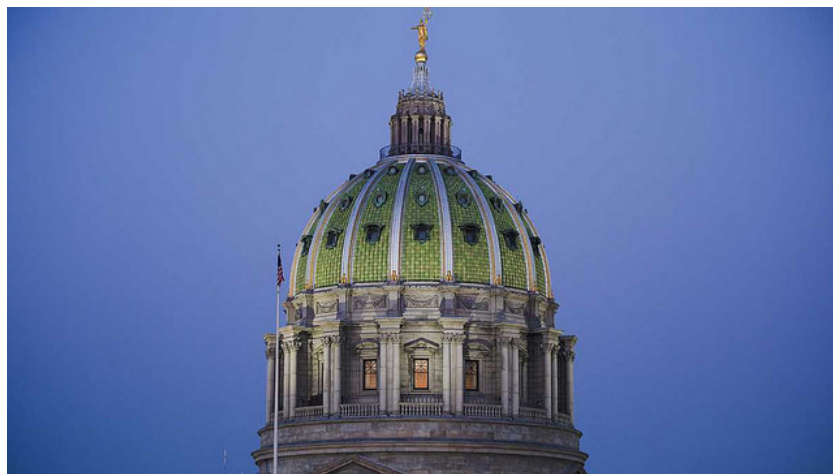
funding by \$405 million and provide another \$30 million for pre-K. He has also proposed a \$1 billion fund to address lead and asbestos in public schools.

The \$435 million in proposed new funding includes smaller increases in basic, special, and early childhood education than in recent years. But it also reflects \$280 million in proposed savings that districts would achieve if the state enacts changes to the current system for

funding cyber charter schools and special education in charters. Under the governor's proposal, the General Assembly would set a fixed tuition rate for cyber charters.

Like our partners in the [PA Schools Work](#) campaign, ELC is calling on the legislature to ensure that public schools receive no less than the full funding that the governor has proposed. To learn more about the governor's proposal, check out our [analysis of Gov. Wolf's 2020-21 budget](#).

Support Grows for Reforming Charters' Special Education Funding



ELC joins with advocates across the state in applauding Gov. Wolf's proposal to close the charter school special education funding "loophole;" this is a key component of his budget plan. This effort builds on years of work by advocates to bring awareness to how charter schools, as a sector, underserve students with disabilities who have complex needs and require more expensive services. Charter schools overall receive substantially more in revenue for students with disabilities than they spend on those students. While tiered rates apply to school districts, charter schools receive a fixed rate for any students with disabilities, incentivizing them

to serve students whose needs are less costly and turn away students with disabilities that have higher-cost needs.

School districts are increasingly [flagging this issue](#). The board of Pittsburgh Public Schools [adopted a resolution](#) last week calling for charter school funding reform, joining the growing number of school boards across the state that have adopted similar resolutions. You can add your voice to the calls for reforms by [signing this petition from Education Voters](#).

Toxic Schools: What Parents Need to Know

Gov. Wolf's proposal for a \$1 billion fund to remediate problems like lead and asbestos in schools is an important move to address the health effects of attending underfunded schools. Deteriorating school buildings and cuts to staff have led to unmet repairs, deferred maintenance, and dangerous conditions in many school buildings statewide. In Philadelphia alone, it is estimated that nearly \$5 billion is needed to address deferred repairs. The cost to our children is even higher. View our [guide](#) for parents on these issues to understand your rights.

ELC Executive Director Presents with Mayor John Street

ELC executive director Deborah Gordon Klehr spoke on a Temple Inn of Court panel with former Philadelphia mayor John Street about inequitable and inadequate state funding of education and its impact on students in Philadelphia. She covered topics such as the disproportionate impact of inadequate state funding on students of color, the unmet need to remediate lead and asbestos in schools, and our current lawsuit challenging the state's school funding system.



New State Guidance Limits Firearms in Schools



The Pennsylvania Department of Education recently [updated its guidance](#) on the training and credentials required for security personnel in schools, reflecting recent changes to state law. We want to highlight PDE's guidance reiterating the training requirements for school police and security personnel – with the

important reminder that *teachers are not authorized to carry firearms* while performing their school duties.

ELC continues to advocate for supportive, safe, and police-free schools.

Did you miss PDE's other new guidance on alternative disciplinary placements and the new statewide protections for students? Find it [here!](#)

Weighing in on "Imagine Pittsburgh"

ELC participated in community engagement sessions in February for the Pittsburgh Public Schools' ongoing "[Imagine Pittsburgh](#)" initiative, which seeks to improve the way that PPS delivers education. We provided input at a



session for immigrant, international, and refugee stakeholders and one for the Local Task Force on the Right to Education. We highlighted the need to provide culturally competent and trauma-informed mental health services within schools and the importance of ensuring that limited-English-proficient parents have the opportunity to meaningfully participate in their children's educations.

Immigrant and Refugee Stakeholder Group Convening

ELC is reconvening the Education Justice Network for Immigrants and Refugees Stakeholder Group on Monday, March 9, from 12 -2 p.m., at ELC's Pittsburgh office. Parents, advocates, and community members are invited to participate and learn about the education rights of English learners and their parents and to discuss education access and equity for immigrants and refugees. Contact ELC attorney Hetal Dhagat at hdhagat@elc-pa.org to learn more.

Unaccompanied Immigrant Youth Have Right to Immediate Enrollment

Sophia Tan, ELC’s Independence Foundation Public Interest Law Fellow, joined with ELC attorney Kristina Moon to present a training to providers supporting immigrant and other limited-English-proficient students and families on Feb. 20 in Philadelphia.

ELC’s presentation sparked conversations about barriers to school enrollment that refugee and other newly arrived youth experience. We highlighted that federal protections for youth experiencing homelessness cover “unaccompanied” immigrant youth who are not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian, so they have the right under federal law to immediate enrollment in their local public school, access to free breakfast and lunch, and free uniforms and school supplies to ensure they are ready to learn. More information on these rights is available in ELC’s [fact sheet](#).

SPECIAL EDUCATION

English learners with disabilities have the right to receive both special education and ESL services.

February 18, 2020
ELC Presentation at HIAS-PA

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One of the slides from our Feb. 20 training.

ELC Raises Concerns about the Use of Threat Assessments

ELC is monitoring the growing use of threat assessments, an [emerging practice](#) enacted into [state law](#) last year. All school entities in Pennsylvania are now required to establish teams of school personnel, typically including a school police officer, for the purpose of assessing and responding to students who have been identified as a “threat” to some portion of the school community.

ELC staff attorney Margie Wakelin was quoted in a recent [Inquirer](#) article about this troubling practice and the case of a young student with disabilities in Tredyffrin-Easttown School District. Increasingly, we are

seeing threat assessments disproportionately remove students of color and students with disabilities from school without due process or other legal protections and involving law enforcement in school activities. We encourage families who have been inappropriately subjected to the threat assessment process to contact our Helpline at 215-238-6970 in the Philadelphia area or 412-258-2120 in Western PA.

What We're Reading...

- [March 2, 1955: Claudette Colvin Refuses to Give Up Her Bus Seat](#), by the Zinn Education Project
- [Speaking Mam in MAGA country: Immigration, education and the teenage boy in the middle](#), by Laura Benshoff for WHY
- [Failed Philly cyber charter application highlights weaknesses in state law, observer says](#), by Elizabeth Hardison for the Pennsylvania Capital-Star
- [Trump's 'education freedom' plan is an attack on public schools. That's un-American](#), by Derek W. Black for USA Today

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