

EDUCATION LAW CENTER

As we take stock of the year that is ending, the Education Law Center and our allies have some significant accomplishments to celebrate. Here are five bright spots from 2019:



Our [lawsuit](#) challenging the state's unequal and inadequate school funding system is progressing toward trial - now scheduled for fall 2020 in Pennsylvania Commonwealth Court. As we and our partners lay the groundwork for trial — involving depositions, witnesses, and experts — we are confident that we will make a powerful case for transforming

the state's school funding system. Our goal is for all children to be able to attend quality schools across the state, regardless of the level of local wealth.

We joined in filing a [class action suit](#) in April challenging the abuse and educational neglect at Glen Mills Schools, the nation's oldest reform school — bolstered by powerful [investigative reporting](#) in the Philadelphia Inquirer. In the face of damning news reports and legal pressure, the facility was shut down. We are encouraged by changes both at the state and local levels to ensure meaningful accountability for youth who are in placements and to implement community-based approaches for children now in residential institutions. We are thrilled to report that last week, [the court ruled](#) that our education claims can go forward.



A [complaint](#) we filed with the U.S. Department of Justice in 2013 that triggered a federal civil rights investigation has now brought needed changes to Pennsylvania's disciplinary "alternative education for disruptive youth" programs. The Pennsylvania Department of Education entered into a settlement agreement with

DOJ this year that culminated in [new guidance](#) establishing a student complaint process, a presumed exit date of 45 days for all students, and protections to ensure that students are not discriminatorily placed in alternative programs by race, disability, or other protected status.

We helped more than 1,000 students who connected with ELC through our Helpline and community partners. For example, we helped "Isabella," a Spanish-speaking student with a disability who had been deprived of appropriate special education and English learner services. As a result of our advocacy, Pittsburgh Public Schools agreed to a compensatory education award and to translate special education communications for Isabella and her parents – and also to new districtwide policies and procedures for evaluating English learners with disabilities and for engaging with limited English proficient families.



The [Fostering Independence Through Education Act](#) was signed into law by Gov. Tom Wolf in June, providing tuition and fee waivers at Pennsylvania colleges and universities for youth who were in foster care at age 16 or older. Passage of this law was a sweet victory, the culmination of years of advocacy. The waivers, which can be used for up to five

years, will go into effect in fall 2020.

In these challenging times, it is important to celebrate our victories. ELC stands firm in our commitment to ensuring access to a quality public education for all children in Philadelphia.

[Your continued support](#) makes these gains possible. Thank you!



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