

For information: Paul Socolar, Education Law Center, 215-372-1650, psocolar@elc-pa.org
Jonathan McJunkin, Public Interest Law Center, 267-546-1305, jmciunkin@pubintl.org

Statement on 2022-23 State Budget from Attorneys Leading the Pennsylvania School Funding Lawsuit

July 7, 2022 –*Today, legislative leaders announced an agreement for the 2022-23 state budget, including a \$525 million increase in state funding for basic education, \$225 million for a Level Up supplement to the 100 most deeply underfunded school districts, a \$100 million increase in special education funding, and \$200 million in grants to school districts for mental health and school safety.*

*Attorneys from **Education Law Center-PA and the Public Interest Law Center**, representing school districts, parents, and organizations in a case challenging Pennsylvania’s system for funding public schools, released the following **joint statement**. The case is in its post-trial phase, with oral argument on the legal issues in the case scheduled for July 26.*

“During a four-month trial in Commonwealth Court, our clients made the effects of Pennsylvania’s inequitable and inadequate school funding system impossible to ignore, describing crumbling buildings, overcrowded classrooms, and students falling further behind each year. The profound disparities and resource deprivations faced by students in low-wealth communities in every corner of the commonwealth, fueled by insufficient state funding, are unconscionable and unconstitutional.

“An analysis of state data during trial showed that low-wealth districts spend \$4,800 less per student than wealthy districts in Pennsylvania. When student need is taken into account—recognizing that students in poverty, students learning English, and students with disabilities require more support to access a quality education—that gap grows to more than \$7,000 per student. This budget agreement is an important step to start closing funding gaps, but it does not ensure that students in every community can receive the high-quality education they’re entitled to under the state Constitution.”

Additional comments from attorneys in the case:

“The significant education funding increase in this budget agreement shows that many in Harrisburg recognize the depth of the hole our legislative leaders have dug for our students. But it is not sufficient to meet the state legislature’s constitutional responsibility to fix our inadequate, two-tiered school funding system,” said Maura McNerney, legal director at the Education Law Center.

“We welcome this start to increasing funding, and we hope that legislators will not wait for court orders before they finally start to do what is necessary and what our constitution requires: Give all of Pennsylvania’s children the opportunity to graduate college- and career-ready, no matter where they live,” said Michael Churchill, attorney at the Public Interest Law Center.

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.pubintl.org or follow on Twitter @PubIntLawCtr.

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, community engagement, and policy advocacy, ELC advances the rights of underserved 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 or @edlawcenterpa on Twitter.