



Joint Statement from Education Law Center-PA and Public Interest Law Center on the Passage of the 2026-27 Budget

Attorneys in fair funding litigation applaud meaningful commitment, but caution about warning signs ahead

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Pennsylvania lawmakers today approved a third consecutive budget that increases adequacy funding for public schools, providing critical investments for addressing the state's obligation to adequately and equitably fund our schools. But as the struggles of many school districts demonstrate, greater investments are required.

"Today's budget keeps Pennsylvania moving toward constitutional compliance by adding \$565 million in adequacy and tax equity investments, which will make a real difference for many students," said Deborah Gordon Klehr, executive director of Education Law Center-PA. "But our schools remain billions of dollars short of the funding the General Assembly identified as needed. And until every child — wherever they live — has access to a well-funded public school, Pennsylvania's constitutional obligation remains unmet."

In 2024, in response to the Commonwealth Court's ruling declaring Pennsylvania's school funding system to be inequitable, inadequate, and unconstitutional, the Commonwealth made a bipartisan commitment to transform a school funding system it recognized as underfunded by nearly \$5 billion. Investments made during the past two years have demonstrated that [adequacy funding makes a meaningful difference for students](#), helping school districts hire educators and support staff, reduce class sizes, expand career and technical education, strengthen early literacy, and improve student well-being — with funding directed to districts that have been the most underfunded for decades.

However, lawmakers have failed to increase several other major education funding streams as required to keep pace with rising costs. As a result, some underfunded

districts will be forced to use some of their adequacy dollars just to keep up with these increasing costs, rather than expanding opportunities for students.

“The warning signs are clear,” said Dan Urevick-Ackelsberg, Senior Attorney at the Public Interest Law Center. “To provide children the education the constitution demands, we need *more* teachers and *more* programs. Despite that, many underfunded schools stayed level this year, while others made cuts. Nothing can make plainer that we need to accelerate the pace of the Commonwealth’s plan for compliance.”

The Basic Education Funding Commission reached the same conclusion two years ago: while adequacy funding is the keystone for bringing the system into compliance, alone it is not enough. The Commission recommended increasing Basic Education Funding by at least \$200 million annually to keep pace with inflation. Similarly, both the Commonwealth Court and the Commission recognized the need for increasing investments in school facilities and pre-K as critical to bringing the system into constitutional compliance. Only when all these components advance together will that compliance be reached.

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*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 X @PubIntLawCtr.*

*The **Education Law Center-PA (ELC-PA)** 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-PA advances the rights of underserved children, including children living in poverty, children of color, children with disabilities, children in the foster care and juvenile justice systems, multilingual learners, LGBTQ+ youth, children experiencing homelessness, and children at the intersection of multiple underserved identities. For more information, visit elc-pa.org or @edlawcenterpa on Instagram.*