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Gov. Wolf, Democratic Legislative Leaders Demand Fair Funding for Public Schools

Harrisburg, PA – Continuing their commitment to students and working families, Governor Tom Wolf and House and Senate Democratic Leaders held a Capitol press conference today to highlight the injustice in the state’s school funding system and call for fair funding of every district.

“School funding in Pennsylvania is still based on enrollment from 30 years ago and hasn’t been updated in a generation,” said Gov. Wolf. “This unfair school funding system is failing students, teachers, and communities, and that’s unacceptable. We need to fix the mistakes of the past and make a comprehensive investment in education funding that actually works.”

The state’s outdated process for funding schools is based on student enrollment in 1992, without considering changes in student counts or current school district costs today. That forces growing school districts across urban, suburban and rural communities to make up for underfunding from the state by raising property taxes, increasing the burden on homeowners and businesses.

The fair funding formula signed by Gov. Wolf in 2016 was a major bipartisan achievement, but only applies to new funding. Last year, only 11 percent, or \$700 million, of state funding ran through it. The remaining 89 percent, or \$5.5 billion, is disbursed using the unfair system still stuck 30 years in the past. Many districts do not receive the state funding to meet the needs of their students.

“We have an opportunity here to bring education funding into the 21st century – where it belongs,” said Gov. Wolf. “To do that, we need to run all current state basic education funding through the fair funding formula, and we need to make sure that no school district loses a single dollar in state funding because of this adjustment.”

The governor joined House Democratic Leader Joanna McClinton, Senate Democratic Leader Jay Costa, House Democratic Appropriations Chairman Matthew Bradford, Senate Democratic Appropriations Chairman Vince Hughes and House and Senate Democratic members, as well

as education experts and stakeholders to deliver a united message of support for Pennsylvania's children.

"I am honored to stand with the dedicated legislative leaders who are calling for our commonwealth to invest in our students," said Gov. Wolf. Every student in our commonwealth deserves an opportunity to succeed. That's what parents want for their children, and it's what Pennsylvania needs for our future."

The governor's education agenda also includes bipartisan charter school accountability reform that improves the quality of education and modernizes how Pennsylvania funds charter schools to match costs rather than forcing school districts to overpay. The estimated \$395 million a year in savings includes \$185 million by funding special education in charter schools the same way the state does for all other public schools and \$210 million a year by establishing a statewide cyber charter school tuition rate. The plan also protects students by creating charter school performance standards that hold low-performing charter schools accountable and protects the public trust by improving transparency so for-profit charter school companies are accountable to parents and taxpayers.

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