

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**BASIC EDUCATION COMMISSION FORMULA MEANS DISTRICTS NEED
AT LEAST \$3.2 BILLION MORE IN STATE FUNDING**

Philadelphia, Pa. – According to a report issued today by the Public Interest Law Center the bipartisan Basic Education Funding Commission’s school funding formula requires an investment of new state funding between \$3.2 billion and \$4.3 billion if Pennsylvania’s students are going to have the resources they need to meet state-imposed academic standards.

Earlier this year, Pennsylvania joined 47 other states in adopting a formula for distributing additional basic education funds. The new formula created by the Basic Education Funding Commission recognizes that certain students need more resources, such as students living in poverty. It also weights factors like district sparsity or the presence of charter students, and it outlines how much funding should come from the state and how much should come from local taxes.

The Basic Education Funding Commission did not, however, calculate how much their formula would actually cost. But attorneys for the Public Interest Law Center have used the formula and state data to calculate the cost of adequately funding Pennsylvania’s schools. Attorneys started with the most recent data available for each school district’s per-student instructional costs, also known as “Actual Instruction Expense” or AIE. Attorneys adjusted these figures to reflect the Commission’s weights, and then plugged in the state-wide median AIE (\$7,803) to find that at least \$3.188 billion in new state funding is required.

“Legislators should develop a multi-year program to appropriate at least \$3.2 billion as a first step to providing the funding needed to enable students to succeed and for schools to effectively teach,” said Michael Churchill, lead author of the report and of counsel for the Public Interest Law Center. “Providing that support – in a predictable manner – is critical to helping students master state standards of what they need to know in today’s world.”

Churchill notes that the \$3.2 billion result is conservative because it assumes the 2013-14 median AIE amount used is sufficient despite the fact that more than a third of the state’s students were not testing proficient that year and 70 percent of the districts had at least one school not meeting state goals in reading or math that year. The Public Interest Law Center’s report therefore also looks at how much the fully-funded formula would cost if the state uses the median AIE cost for the 189 school districts which scored average or above in the three PSSA exams (\$8,826) in 2014-2015. The report shows that using this higher median, which more accurately reflects the costs of providing an education such that students can meet state standards, would cost the state \$4.28 billion in new funding.

“This calculation of what districts need from the state in order to be able to provide basic education services to their students should set the agenda for state appropriations,” said Joan Benso, President & CEO of Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children.

“A frequent question asked of educators calling for additional state funding is ‘how much is enough?’ This report provides the answer to that question,” said Jim Buckheit, executive director of PA Association of School Administrators. “It offers a clear course of action for state policymakers to provide the resources necessary for each student, regardless of where they live in this Commonwealth, to have access to quality educational opportunities.”

The state-wide median of the adjusted AIE used in the report is less than the base amount used in the legislature’s 2007 Costing Out Study (\$8,003). That number today, adjusted for inflation, would be \$9,152 per student, greater than either of the AIE figures used in the report.

“The state constitution requires the legislature to support and maintain a thorough and efficient system of education,” said Jennifer Clarke, executive director of the Public Interest Law Center. “Now the legislature knows how much it would cost to improve our schools under its own formula. It is more important than ever that the legislature be held accountable to meet its own funding standards.”

The Public Interest Law Center and the Education Law Center-PA are counsel for six families, six school districts, the Pennsylvania NAACP and the Pennsylvania Association of Rural and Small Schools in a lawsuit against state officials for failing to meet this constitutional responsibility. Their appeal, which argues the courts must step in and send the case to a full trial, is pending before the Pennsylvania Supreme Court. Oral argument in the appeal is expected to be heard by the court this fall.

A copy of the full report, along with a spreadsheet showing how much each district would receive annually under the Commission’s formula if the \$3.2 billion or \$4.3 billion were funded over an 8-year period, [is available on the Law Center’s website](#).

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The Public Interest Law Center uses high-impact legal strategies to improve the well-being and life prospects of vulnerable populations by ensuring they have access to fundamental resources including a high-quality public education, access to health care, employment, housing, safe and healthy neighborhoods and the right to vote. For more information visit www.pubintl.org or follow on Twitter @PubIntLawCtr.