



PHILADELPHIA BAR ASSOCIATION

A. Michael Pratt, Esq.
CHANCELLOR

3000 Two Logan Square : 18th and Arch Streets : Philadelphia, PA 19103-2799
215-981-4386 Fax: 215-981-4750 : E-mail: prattam@pepperlaw.com

June 3, 2009

Honorable Robert J. Mellow
Senate of Pennsylvania
545 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Senator Mellow,

The 13,000-member Philadelphia Bar Association urges the General Assembly to enact in this budget cycle a new educational funding formula providing all districts with adequate resources over a six-year period to meet state proficiency standards in accordance with the Costing Out Study commissioned by the General Assembly.

As citizens and business persons, we know that an adequate education system throughout the state - in rural areas, suburbs, small cities and big cities - is vital to the economic health of every community and to the state as a whole.

As members of the bar, we know that a well-funded public education system is essential for an informed citizenry to be able to vote, serve as jurors, and participate in the political and legal systems. That is why the Pennsylvania Constitution uniquely singles out education as a mandatory service that the General Assembly is required to provide in order for there to be a "thorough and efficient system of public education."

We also have seen the impact in the criminal justice system of persons who have dropped out of school, have limited reading and math skills, and are unprepared for jobs in our modern economy.

Currently, where you live determines the resources available to students, all of whom must meet the same state proficiency standards. **The Costing Out Study demonstrated that the vast majority of school districts are far short of adequate funding in order to meet those standards. Since 1991, the lack of any formula based on actual students and their needs has made it difficult for school districts throughout the state to meet the educational needs of their students.** Districts with high growth or serving large numbers of students in poverty have been particularly hard hit by the lack of a formula taking those factors into account.

YOUR PARTNER FOR JUSTICE

1101 Market Street | 11th Floor | Philadelphia, PA 19107-2955
215-238-6300 | Fax: 215-238-1159 | philadelphiabar.org

Philadelphia Bar Association/Education Funding
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A predictable formula based on actual costs and additional state funds are the two critical ingredients. The state share of education costs (currently 36%) makes Pennsylvania the sixth lowest in the country. Failing to act now just pushes the Adequacy Gap identified in the Costing Out Study onto the districts with their widely differing and often inadequate local tax bases.

Fixing our public school funding system is the highest priority for the health of our Commonwealth. Districts, and their 1.8 million students, in every part of the state will benefit. For that reason, the Philadelphia Bar Association's Board of Governors unanimously adopted the attached resolution on May 29, 2008, and urges you to vigorously support the necessary legislation to adequately fund our schools and ensure the future vitality of this great Commonwealth.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "A. Michael Pratt".

A. Michael Pratt, Esquire
Chancellor

Enclosure