

Chairman Adolph, Chairman Markosek, and committee members, thank you for the opportunity to testify today and thank you for the excellent questions you asked of the Secretary of Education on Tuesday.

In the interest of time, today I will quickly provide a summary of my testimony and submit more detailed testimony in writing to the Committee.

Mr. Chairman, the education questions on Tuesday validated my concerns about the funding allocations announced in January by the Department of Education. Despite the fact that we now have a bipartisan, unanimously recommended Basic Education Funding formula, the Department instead chose to extend bad policy another 24 years by picking winners and losers based on politics and political expediency.

Mr. Chairman, with the new Basic Education Funding Commission Report and its recommended BEF formula we have the opportunity to fix 24 years of rotten injustice. The BEF Commission identified 180 school districts have been unfunded \$937 Million, ANNUALLY.

Mr. Chairman, I want to be very clear... because this is nearly a Billion Dollar problem here. In June 2015, after the bi-partisan BEF Commission received thousands of pages of testimony from hundreds of education leaders, and reviewed all the data, the Commission determined 180 School Districts are under-funded by more than 937 Million, ANNUALLY.

Now is the Time to fix this problem.

If we do not address the 180 under-funded schools first, these 180 schools will be doomed to remain under-funded for another 24 years and beyond and that is devastatingly wrong. It's dreadful.

The state's poorest school district, Reading School District is under-funded by \$95 Million. Literally, Reading taxpayers, students and educators have been shortchanged ONE BILLION DOLLARS over the past ten (10) years.

No one in the Equity First coalition is demanding that the 320 over-funded School Districts refund their over-payments. In fact, Equity First simply wants under-funded school districts be made whole and brought up to their rightful level of funding, ASAP. Then, when equity is reached, all dollars would flow through the new BEF Commission formula.

Citizens can support Equity First by visiting:
<http://www.SupportEquityFirst.org/>

Mr. Chairman, our time is short, but this year we can start to fix 24 years of injustice. All new education funding should go first to the 180 underfunded school districts until they reach equity, and then all funds should be distributed via the June 2015 bipartisan Basic Education Funding Formula.

My written testimony amplifies the many reasons we need Equity First, School Consolidation, bench-marking, and Performance Metrics.

Representative David Parker
Written Testimony submitted to be part of the record:

Mr Chairman,

I stand with my colleagues who share a mutual desire to make Pennsylvania the strongest economy in the Nation. We believe in creating an efficient government that delivers excellent services to our citizens, positioning Pennsylvania to compete globally and nationally in the months and years to come.

Instead of crippling Pennsylvania's economic growth with higher, job-crushing taxes and dumping more millions into unaccountable, non-transparent programs, our plan is designed to increase economic growth.

We are fighting for families to keep more of their hard earned money, because we believe Pennsylvania families can, have and will make wiser

investments in their schools, communities and economies than Harrisburg or Washington D.C.

When it comes to Government's role, the test should be simple:

- Does this government program make Pennsylvania Stronger, Safer, Better?
- Does this government expenditure make Pennsylvania Stronger, Safer, Better?
- For this government program, is there a better way, other than government, to get a better result?
- If this program is a core function, it must be excellent and deliver a strong return on investment for taxpayers.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in our Education System. Pennsylvania Taxpayers own 500 school districts. Taxpayers have invested billions into these 500 school districts and they deserve an Excellent Return on their Investment. For the past 24 years, under hold-harmless, our investment has been misallocated and misspent and the resulting inequities are crushing some taxpayers and shortchanging students. We have some public school students receiving \$900 from the state, while others get \$9,000. This is patently unfair. We have a new Basic Education Funding Formula which clearly shows that 180 school districts are underfunded by \$937 million dollars. We need to focus on getting those 180 districts to the proper funding level and getting their property taxpayers the relief they deserve. Reading School District is currently underfunded by \$95 million dollars in basic education funding according to the new formula. The three school districts in my Monroe County legislative district are underfunded by \$50 million. Now is the time to target our education investments to the students and taxpayers of Reading, Pocono Mountain, East Stroudsburg, Stroudsburg and all the underfunded districts.

To make sure these investments pay-off:

- We need benchmarks
- We need best-practices
- We need cost-savings efforts so funding gets re-purposed to educating students instead of funding waste.
- We need students reading more.

- We need students writing more.
- We need students working on projects solving real-world problems.
- We need Career Technical schools to be excellent, because our economy and families desperately need these crucial services. We should be praising kids for getting into these vital industries.

The people of Monroe County have been paying the highest percentage of their income - higher than anywhere else in the state - to fund education. Our students deserve their fair share, our taxpayers need relief. We have a new formula and now is the time to invest in our underfunded school districts and overtaxed homeowners. While doing this, we need accountability and taxpayer protections.

- 4% cap on reserve funds
- Cost Savings commissions in each school district.
- Referendum vote on property tax increases above 2.5%

Right now, we have an historic opportunity before the General Assembly and Governor. After decades of kicking the can, we have the new formula from the bipartisan Education Funding Commission. We need the best education system so our economy and companies can continue to compete nationally and globally. Now is the time to act and lead our Commonwealth.

David Parker
State Representative 115th District
411 Main St. Suite 102-E
Stroudsburg, PA 18360
dparker@pahousegop.com
570-420-2940