

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

SENATE RESOLUTION

No. 243 Session of 2010

INTRODUCED BY PICCOLA, DINNIMAN, BROWNE, M. WHITE, TOMLINSON, FOLMER, ARGALL, WARD, ERICKSON, PILEGGI, GORDNER, BOSCOLA, STACK, WAUGH, RAFFERTY, EARLL, D. WHITE, ORIE AND SCARNATI, FEBRUARY 8, 2010

SENATOR PICCOLA, EDUCATION, AS AMENDED, MARCH 16, 2010

A RESOLUTION

1 Directing the Joint State Government Commission to conduct a
2 study of efficiency in public school funding and directing
3 the State Board of Education to provide documents and
4 assistance to the Joint State Government Commission in its
5 conduct of this study.

6 WHEREAS, The General Assembly authorized a Statewide costing-
7 out study for public education funding under Act 114 of 2006;
8 and

9 WHEREAS, The State Board of Education was delegated the
10 authority to hire a consultant to perform this study; and

11 WHEREAS, The State Board of Education contracted with
12 Augenblick, Palaich and Associates (APA) of Denver, Colorado, to
13 conduct the study; and

14 WHEREAS, This study's legislative intent was to examine
15 issues of adequacy and equity in public school funding and to
16 determine the basic cost per pupil to provide an education that
17 will permit a student to meet the Commonwealth's academic
18 standards and assessments; and

1       WHEREAS, Act 114 specifically requires the study to examine  
2 "exemplary school districts that are high-performing and low-  
3 spending school districts," but Act 114 does not explicitly  
4 mandate other methodologies to be applied in the study; and

5       WHEREAS, The study conducted by APA subsequently used three  
6 methodologies: a "Successful Schools" approach that was  
7 consistent with the explicit requirements of Act 114, but also  
8 two additional methodologies referred to as "Professional  
9 Judgment" panels and "Evidence-Based" research that were not  
10 required under law; and

11       WHEREAS, The final report issued to the Commonwealth by APA  
12 used a combination of all three of these methodologies to  
13 recommend specific dollar amounts for the basic cost per pupil,  
14 plus additional weights and other modifications that increase  
15 the basic cost per pupil; and

16       WHEREAS, The final report does not provide any indication as  
17 to how the three methodologies were combined or compared against  
18 one another, nor does it provide any other information detailing  
19 how the specific recommended numbers in its findings were  
20 actually calculated in the study; and

21       WHEREAS, Both the State Board of Education and APA testified  
22 to the Education Committee of the Senate on December 8, 2009,  
23 that the specific methodology applied to derive the final  
24 funding recommendation cannot be disclosed to the General  
25 Assembly because APA believes it is proprietary information; and

26       WHEREAS, The results of this study call for an additional  
27 target of \$4.61 billion annually of taxpayer funds for public  
28 school funding, or a 26.8% increase, but APA testified that it  
29 cannot provide the quantitative numbers used to justify this  
30 target; and

1       WHEREAS, The "Successful Schools" approach used by APA in the  
2 study was the only methodology that was explicitly authorized in  
3 Act 114 because it focused on high-performing and low-spending  
4 school districts; and

5       WHEREAS, The Commonwealth should focus its attention toward  
6 the most efficient use of the dollars already available for  
7 public schools; and

8       WHEREAS, The Commonwealth should build upon the work already  
9 conducted in the original costing-out study by examining the  
10 schools identified in the report under the "Successful Schools"  
11 methodology to learn their best practices and other factors that  
12 have resulted in their identification as a high-performing, low-  
13 spending school district; therefore be it

14       RESOLVED, That the Senate direct the Joint State Government  
15 Commission to conduct a study of the 82 school districts found  
16 to be successful schools in the APA costing-out study and to  
17 issue a report to the chairman of the Education Committee of the  
18 Senate of their best practices and other factors that are  
19 believed to help contribute to this recognized efficiency and  
20 success; and be it further

21       RESOLVED, That the Senate direct the State Board of Education  
22 to cooperate fully with the Joint State Government Commission in  
23 providing documentation from the original costing-out study and  
24 other assistance as the Joint State Government Commission  
25 requests; and be it further

26       RESOLVED, That the report from the Joint State Government  
27 Commission be submitted to the ~~chairman~~ SENATE AND TO THE  
28 CHAIRMAN AND MINORITY CHAIRMAN of the Education Committee of the  
29 Senate no later than November 1, 2010; and be it further

30       RESOLVED, That the final report serve as the basis for future



1 deliberations by the Senate on the Commonwealth's basic  
2 education funding levels and components.