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Good Schools  
Pennsylvania  
Every Kid Counts.

October 13, 2005

6757 Greene Street  
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Dear Legislator:

We write to urge the General Assembly and the Governor to address the needs of Pennsylvania's public school students during this special session on property tax reform. As high property taxes are only a symptom of a much deeper problem, property tax reform that is not accompanied by school funding reform is destined to fail our children, our schools, our communities – as well as taxpayers.

Our Constitution calls upon the General Assembly to provide a "thorough and efficient system of public education." Yet, for decades, our state lawmakers have failed to live up to their responsibility to support high quality public education. Today, only one state pays a smaller share of total education costs than Pennsylvania. Quite simply, if the state would pay its fair share of public school costs, local districts would not need to raise property taxes to such high levels.

Furthermore, cutting property taxes without raising the state's role in education funding threatens the fiscal well-being of public schools in the short run, and would not permanently reduce the burden on taxpayers in the long run. Families will continue to demand excellent schools, eventually exerting local pressure to increase property taxes above the levels set in the proposals pending before the General Assembly.

Not only does the lack of a sound school funding formula inflate Pennsylvanian's property taxes – it also results in huge disparities in spending from district to district. Combining local, state, and federal funds – some districts are able to spend more than twice as much as others on teacher salaries, technology, tutoring and other items needed to raise achievement. The quality of students' education should not depend on their zip code of residence; eliminating this "opportunity gap" should be a priority for the General Assembly and the Governor, not simply cutting property taxes.

**Letter to Legislators about School Funding Reform and the Special Session  
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Safe and successful schools will require – and deserve – continued high levels of funding. This money must come from taxpayers in one form or another, even if property taxes are reduced. Therefore, changing the way Pennsylvania pays for public education and establishing a sound school funding formula is the only true long term solution to high property taxes. Dozens of other states have reformed their school funding systems. Pennsylvania must act before our children and our economy are left behind.

Several reasonable options exist and should be considered along with property tax reform. For example:

- More fully funding the foundation formula to provide greater support to the neediest school districts;
- Adopting a new funding formula based on what it takes to achieve academic success such as found in the Micozzie Successful School Budget.
- Initiating an ongoing state process for "costing out" to develop and utilize the data required to match annual funding with real educational needs; or
- Other proposed options for closing the opportunity gap.

Please act to support school funding reform and vote against property tax reform that ignores the needs of our education system. Our children are depending on you.

Sincerely,

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**❖ Following is a list of organizations and individuals co-signing this letter. The list is organized in zip code order.**

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