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Joint Statement from Education Law Center and Public Interest Law Center on Gov. Wolf's Education Budget Proposal

"Today Gov. Tom Wolf proposed a \$1.75 billion increase in funding for Pennsylvania's K-12 public schools. The budget includes increases of \$1.25 billion in basic education funding and an additional \$300 million in funding to the state's 100 most underfunded districts as a Level Up supplement. The governor's proposal also includes \$200 million in new funding for special education services, as well as \$70 million in pre-K funding.

"The Education Law Center and Public Interest Law Center, which together represent six petitioner school districts as well as parents and statewide organizations in the ongoing lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of the commonwealth's school funding system, have called for Pennsylvania officials to provide more substantial, recurring annual increases in state funding, distributed equitably based on need.

"The law centers applaud the governor's budget proposal, which, if adopted, would provide significant new funds and start to close an estimated \$4.6 billion funding adequacy shortfall affecting Pennsylvania students. The school funding trial that we and our clients are litigating has revealed unacceptable, deeply entrenched inequities that have built up over decades of state underfunding. This budget proposal would only begin to address the harm caused by the unmet educational needs of students in our state's underfunded, low-wealth school districts."

*"The school funding trial has exposed the unmet needs of students in Pennsylvania's underfunded school districts and the urgent need for action to fix this failed system. Gov. Wolf's budget proposal provides a much-needed down payment that will fill part of the longstanding, growing gaps in resources that prevent so many students from achieving their potential and preparing for college and career success," said **Education Law Center executive director Deborah Gordon Klehr**. "With a significant budget surplus, now is the time for the General Assembly to start putting our school funding system on the right track."*

*"The governor's budget proposal is a first step toward repairing a deeply flawed system that shortchanges students and leaves behind low-wealth school districts across the commonwealth," said **Public Interest Law Center legal director Mimi McKenzie**. "But the unmet needs of our students have compounded over decades of insufficient state funding, distributed irrationally, and we need a sustained long-term solution. The legislature should pass this proposal and get to work on a plan to address its constitutional obligation: ensuring that all Pennsylvania school districts and students have the resources they need for quality public education, regardless of local wealth."*

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The Public Interest Law Center uses high-impact legal strategies to advance the civil, social, and economic rights of communities in the Philadelphia region facing discrimination, inequality, and poverty. We use litigation, community education, advocacy, and organizing to secure their access to fundamental resources and services in the areas of public education, housing, health care, employment, environmental justice and voting. For more information, visit www.pubintl.org or follow on Twitter @PubIntLawCtr.

The Education Law Center-PA (ELC) is a nonprofit, legal advocacy organization with offices in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, dedicated to ensuring that all children in Pennsylvania have access to a quality public education. Through legal representation, impact litigation, community engagement, and policy advocacy, ELC advances the rights of underserved children, including children living in poverty, children of color, children in the foster care and juvenile justice systems, children with disabilities, English learners, LGBTQ students, and children experiencing homelessness. For more information, visit elc-pa.org or @edlawcenterpa on Twitter.