Dear Governor and General Assembly,

We join together to urge you to increase your investment in students from the Commonwealth’s most under-resourced districts. Most of these districts serve a disproportionate share of the Commonwealth’s students of color, students living in poverty, students with disabilities, and English learners. They face large adequacy and equity gaps that prevent schools from meeting the needs of hundreds of thousands of our most underserved students, limiting their educational opportunities and threatening the Commonwealth’s future workforce, tax base, and economy.

While Pennsylvania’s Basic Education Funding (BEF) formula provides weighted student funding for districts with higher levels of need, only new education spending is distributed using the formula, and at the current rate of increases in state educational spending, it will take decades or more for our districts to reach adequate funding through increases in new BEF spending; the increases are too small and spread across too many districts to close the gap.

As superintendents, we are committed to meeting the needs of our students, and even with some of the highest tax effort in the Commonwealth, we cannot do it alone.

In addition to increasing BEF spending to meet the needs of all 500 districts in Pennsylvania, a separate Level Up supplement fund is needed to accelerate the path to adequacy and equity for the 20% of districts that are most underfunded. We propose that Pennsylvania allocate at least $100 million for the Level Up fund for 2021–22, which will be distributed pro-rated through the weighted BEF formula to the 100 identified districts and added to school districts’ base funding. The Level Up supplement does not take funding away from any school districts. Instead, it targets additional support to the districts with the greatest funding needs.

Equity is the issue of our time, as COVID has highlighted the disparities between the haves and have-nots. Many districts have struggled to open. We need to have a commitment from our leadership in Harrisburg that resources will be committed to permanently address these gaps.

Federal government relief is a one-time injection of funds to deliver funding to recover from learning loss and get schools and students through the aftermath of the pandemic. We can’t use one-time federal funds for recurring expenses or to solve longstanding inequities in school funding. Under-resourced districts are being overwhelmed by steadily growing operational costs that are beyond school districts’ control and beyond districts’ ability to raise taxes at the local level.

We need to see action this year that will address our needs so we can best serve our students and to see all of Pennsylvania’s more than 1.7 million public school students experience the opportunity to attend schools that have the financial resources to provide a quality education.
Thank you for your commitment to our students and to their education. It is our moral responsibility to rise to this challenge and provide the education our children deserve.

Sincerely,

Dr. Joie Green  Mahanoy Area School District
Dr. Tomas Hanna  Coatesville Area School District
Dr. Mark Holtzman, Jr.  Mckeesport Area School District
Sheri Yetzer  Corry Area School District
Dr. Damaris Rau  School District of Lancaster
Brian Polito  Erie School District
William Marshall  Penn Cambria School District
Dr. Ronald Grevera  Greater Nanticoke Area School District
Dr. Joseph Bradley  Connellsville Area School District
Mark Loucks  Franklin Area School District
Nathan Barrett  Hanover Area School District
Donna Miller  Girard School District
Alan Johnson  East Allegheny School District
Dave Tosh  Wyoming Valley West School District
Dave McAndrew  Panther Valley School District
Dr. Joseph Roy  Bethlehem Area School District
Mike Calla  Sharon City School District
Amy Arcurio  Greater Johnstown School District
Dr. Travis Waters  Steelton-Highspire School District
Stephanie Keebler  Titusville School District
Dr. Daniel McGarry  Upper Darby School District
Dr. Lynda Weller  Oil City School District
Stephen Rodriguez  Pottstown School District
Chris Celmer  Harrisburg City School District
Dr. Brian Uplinger  Hazleton Area School District
Dr. Jane Bovalino  Rochester Area School District
Christopher Dormer  Norristown Area School District
Edward Wehrer  Steel Valley School District
Dr. Edward Zelich  Charleroi Area School District
Patrick Sheehan  Mid Valley School District
Dr. Jess Wallace  Laurel Highlands School District
Fred Foster  Huntingdon Area School District
Matthew Jones  School District of the City of Jeannette
Dr. William Hite  School District of Philadelphia
Dr. Eric Becoats  William Penn School District
Dr. Lisa Duval  South Allegheny School District
Jeff Boyer  Ferndale Area School District
Frank Dalmas  Sto–Rox School District
Wendy Benton  DuBois Area School District
Christopher Pegg  Albert Gallatin Area School District
Dr. Marilyn Martinez  Allentown School District
Dr. Missy McTiernan  Scranton School District
Dr. Charles Prijatelj  Altoona Area School District
Dr. John Hansen  Northwestern School District
Sue Mariani  Duquesne City School District
Dr. Timothy Bowers  Williamsport Area School District
Dr. Khalid Mumin  Reading School District
Dr. Robert Ackell  North Schuylkill School District
David Woods  Oxford Area School District