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Kate Philips | 215-850-4647

Paul Socolar | 215-372-1650

## **LEVEL UP COALITION APPLAUDS SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS, SCHOOLS IN PA BUDGET**

*\$225 Million Level Up Supplement is Consequential Step in the Right Direction*

**HARRISBURG (July 7, 2022)** — As part of the 2022–23 budget agreement, lawmakers included a \$225 million equity supplement for the state’s 100 school districts that have the greatest student need and the fewest resources. The measure is based on the Level Up coalition’s 2021 proposal supported by superintendents across the state, which Governor Wolf included in his Executive Budget Proposal and was the basis for HB 2414 and outlined in SB 1223 introduced by Representative Michael Schlossberg and Senator Tim Kearney.

Members of the Level Up coalition issued the following statement lauding the inclusion of a Level Up supplement in the final budget agreement.

The Level Up Coalition is a statewide partnership of thirteen organizations that for the last two years have singularly focused on accelerating the pace of closing the state school funding gap between the districts that have sufficient resources and those are the lowest spending in the state. Within months of forming the coalition in 2021, it succeeded in getting HB 1167 introduced and passed. The bill spelled out a mechanism for identifying the 100 most underfunded school districts and allocating a supplemental pot of \$100 million to these schools to help narrow the state’s vast disparities in funding.

In proposing this year’s state budget, after intense advocacy by the members of the Level Up coalition and school district leaders, the Governor embraced the Coalition’s proposal, which with legislative support was a key mechanism for allocating \$750 million in additional funds to school districts in the budget enacted last week. The school districts that benefitted from a double dose of funds allocated via the Fair Funding Formula. These schools educate 65% of Pennsylvania’s Black students, 58% of Pennsylvania’s Latinx students, 58% of Pennsylvania’s students in poverty, 64% of Pennsylvania’s English learners, 35% of Pennsylvania’s students with disabilities, and 32% of Pennsylvania’s total student population.

The groups from southeastern Pennsylvania who led the work to enact Level Up are ACLAMO, Children First, Education Law Center, Education Voters of PA, Public Interest Law Center, Teach Plus Pennsylvania, and the Urban League of Philadelphia — see full coalition list below.

“Level Up is a consequential step in the right direction and long overdue recognition that inequity among districts must be addressed,” said Donna Cooper, Executive Director, Children First. “This funding, which slowly begins to level the playing field, temporarily eases the burden that superintendents, school boards, and educators in rural, urban, and suburban school districts are faced with every day due to chronic funding disparities.

“To get Level Up passed, we know that superintendents, other statewide groups such as the PA Schools Works campaign, the School Boards Association, the Pennsylvania State Education Association, the Federation of Teachers and POWER also made the case that Pennsylvania’s school funding system is in crisis, and their work assisted in creating the momentum to boost spending for education writ large. The Level Up Coalition delivered this critical double dose for the 100 lowest wealth districts,” said Cooper.

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“The Level Up funding in this year’s budget is another overdue payment that will help to inch our most inequitably funded school districts along the long road toward adequacy,” said Deborah Gordon Klehr, Executive Director, Education Law Center. “And while this Level Up allocation is not a systemic fix to the inadequacy and inequity of Pennsylvania’s funding system, it is giving these districts a meaningful payment, a step toward a more level playing field for Pennsylvania’s 1.7 million public school students.”

“Every student in Pennsylvania deserves a chance at success, and Level Up gives students who have missed out because of the zip code they are born into a boost they deserve,” said Susan Spicka, Executive Director, Education Voters of Pennsylvania. “We look forward to continue working with legislators, superintendents, educators, taxpayers, and students who all stood up for Level Up.”

The recently concluded Pennsylvania school funding trial laid bare the fact that our commonwealth has one of the most inequitable and inadequately funded public school systems in America. Urban, rural, and suburban school districts alike are all impacted by chronic underfunding and the students attending those schools do not have the same opportunities as students living in wealthier districts.

As a result of years of underfunding at the state level, school districts across Pennsylvania must rely on local wealth – property taxes – to fund their schools. Communities with a robust local tax base can raise sufficient funding to meet students’ needs, while students living in poor districts go without essential resources, despite high property tax efforts.

The Level Up coalition is committed to addressing the large gap between the resources schools have and what they need. The growing disparity among Pennsylvania’s wealthy and poor districts creates enormous inequity, leaving an entire generation of children in underfunded districts ill-prepared for college, career, and the real-world challenges of adulthood.

The partner organizations comprising the Level Up coalition include ACLAMO, CASA, Children First (formerly known as Public Citizens for Children and Youth), Education Law Center, Education Rights Network, Education Voters of PA, Make the Road Pennsylvania, One Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania Budget and Policy Center, Public Interest Law Center, Teach Plus Pennsylvania, and the Urban League of Philadelphia.

The Level Up coalition believes that every child in Pennsylvania deserves robust course choices, class sizes that allow for personalized support, enough school counselors and nurses, and a safe learning environment so they can thrive and succeed in school today and live productive, fulfilling lives after graduation.

For more information, please visit <https://leveluppa.org/>.

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