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## LEVEL UP FUNDING LEFT OUT IN INAUGURAL SHAPIRO BUDGET PROPOSAL

*Funding for Poorest School Districts was Closing Equity Gap, Enjoyed Bipartisan Support*

**Harrisburg, PA (March 7, 2023)** — Level Up, a coalition of more than a dozen education advocacy organizations from across the commonwealth, issued the following statement following Governor Josh Shapiro's first Pennsylvania budget address. The Level Up funding, which targets closing the equity gap between the state's 100 poorest school districts and their wealthier neighbors was conspicuously removed from the 2023–24 proposed Executive Budget.

“Pennsylvania has one of the most inequitable and inadequately funded public school systems in America, which was recently reaffirmed by a Pennsylvania Commonwealth Court judge — declaring PA’s school funding system unconstitutional. Considering that court ruling and the tremendous bipartisan support the Level Up funding has gained since its inception just two years ago, we are shocked and bewildered to see it left on the proverbial cutting room floor.

“Pennsylvania is facing the legislative challenge of our generation, as leaders in Harrisburg have been court-ordered to close the wide funding gap that has left tens of thousands of students without an opportunity to learn in a constitutionally mandated thorough and efficient public education system. The Level Up supplement would accelerate funding to the 100 school districts that have been most impacted by decades of underfunding. Along with a proposed \$567 million in basic education funding, it would help to fill an estimated \$4.6 billion education funding gap. Level Up is a powerful tool Pennsylvania should use to achieve the Court’s mandate.

“Our coalition believes Governor Shapiro has the vision to work toward this achievable goal, and we are eager to work with him, legislative leaders and the General Assembly to ensure this effective funding scheme is reinstated.”

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 low-wealth districts go without essential resources, despite high property tax efforts. Those 100 districts with the biggest funding shortfalls are where a majority of the state’s Black and Latino students attend school.

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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