Introduction

This paper updates the Pennsylvania Budget and Policy Center’s analysis of the inadequacy and inequity in school funding to take into account the 2022-23 budget enacted at the end of June 2022. Our conclusion is that, despite the substantial $850 million addition to basic education funding and level up funding this year, Pennsylvania's K-12 school districts remain both inadequately and inequitably funded. The funding gap between rich and poor school districts as well as those with a large and small share of Black and Hispanic students, remains deeply wrong, from both a moral and pragmatic point of view. These inequities are fundamentally unfair. And the harm the long-term prospects of too many of our kids as well as of the Pennsylvania economy as a whole.1

Pennsylvania’s K-12 schools have been inadequately and inequitably funded for decades. As we show in detail later in this paper, the state’s total spending on K-12 education is $4.6 billion short in providing an adequate education to all students, by the state’s own standard of adequacy. That inadequate level of funding is distributed inequitably—the best-funded school districts spend about 33% more than the worst-funded ones—one of the largest gaps in the entire country.2 And as we show below, the per-student funding gap between wealthy and poor districts, as well as between school districts with low shares of Black and Hispanic students and those with a high shares of such students, is strikingly large.

This paper gives an overview of the issue, one that demonstrates just how unfair—and in fact, morally unsustainable—the funding of elementary and secondary education is in the Commonwealth.

The Source of Inadequacy and Inequity in School Funding

The origins of the deep inadequacy and inequity in school funding in Pennsylvania go back decades.3 For the purposes of this paper, we can divide the source of the problem into two parts.

---


The Declining Share of State Funding
The first is that the state share of funding of K-12 schools has been declining since the early 1970s under both Democratic and Republican governors—*but mostly as a result of Republican control of the General Assembly*. As Figure 1 shows, in the early 1970s the state covered 54% of the actual instructional expenses of our schools—that share has declined to 33%. This is far below the national average of 46.7%.

Several key moments in the long-term decline in state funding stand out. The trend is reversed for a number of years under Governor Rendell, starting in 2005-06 and continuing through 2010-11. But then there is a striking drop in 2011-12 under Governor Corbett. The state share of spending remains stagnant until 2019-20 and then declines again. While we don’t have the data to report on current year funding, we expect a small increase in the state share.

*Figure 1*

**State Share of K-12 Education Funding (%)**

![Graph showing state share of K-12 education funding (%).](image)

Source: Pennsylvania Budget and Policy Center based on Pennsylvania Department of Education Data

Figure 2 shows recent trends in state appropriations for what PBPC calls “classroom spending.” It includes basic education funding (BEF), the Level Up supplement to the BEF, and other programs that the state has used to support classroom instruction since 2011-12, some of which have been
discontinued. It does not include state spending for transportation, pensions, or social security payments.

Figure 2 also shows the deep, almost $1-billion cut in state support for K-12 school districts in 2011-12 under Governor Corbett. This reduction in state support for K-12 school districts led to deep cuts in local school programs, the loss of 27,000 employees in school districts, and sharp increases in local property taxes. Figure 2 then shows the slow increase in funding in subsequent years under Governor Corbett and then, at a slightly higher rate, under Governor Wolf. The increase in classroom spending during these years did not make up for the deep cut of 2011-12 in nominal terms—that is, not accounting for inflation, until 2018-19. And not only did these increases not account for inflation in the cost of education, which tends to be higher than general inflation, but they also failed to account for the increasing burden on school districts from state mandates.

Some of those mandates, such as pension and health care costs, are part of the normal cost of providing an education in a school district. But others, such as payments to charter and cyber charter schools, often drain funds from local school districts in ways that are not related to the cost of providing education in these alternatives to regular public schools. Charter school costs to districts have more than doubled since 2008 and are now more than $2.6 billion per year. Mandates for needed improvements in special education have also been costly to school districts. The number of special education students has grown in Pennsylvania, but state special education funding has declined 12% in real dollars since 2008.

Figure 2 also shows the large increase in school funding proposed by Governor Wolf for the current year budget. Though the General Assembly appropriates substantially less than requested by Governor Wolf, classroom spending will increase by $875 million in the current year. While this long-overdue substantial increase in school funding is welcome, it still leaves Pennsylvania’s K-12 school districts more than $4.5 billion short of adequate funding.

4. Classroom spending includes basic education funding (BEF), Level Up funds, and federal ARRA funds that were used during the Great Recession in 2009-2011 to supplement BEF, school improvement grants, the accountability block grant, the Ready to Learn block grant, the education assistance program, and the hybrid learning program.

5. In 2021-2022 and subsequent years, the state included funds to cover Social Security payments for teachers in the BEF. To maintain compatibility with earlier years in this time series we exclude them.

6. It is important to understand that education is a labor-intensive process. Even though modern computer technology can assist teachers in their work, education fundamentally involves the interaction of teachers and students and thus cannot be automated as can the production of cars, computers, and other things. That is why inflation in the cost of education and other labor-intensive services, like haircuts and musical performance, increase faster than general inflation.


The long-term decline in state funding for K-12 school districts contributes to inadequate spending in a few ways. Because in almost all districts, taxpayers elect local school board members in all but the wealthiest communities they are reluctant to raise local taxes to the level needed to provide an adequate education. This unwillingness to raise taxes is compounded by the impact of increasing school taxes on local economies. We have long argued that tax rates play a far smaller role than is usually imagined in businesses’ decisions to invest in one community or another. Typically, businesses are far more concerned with whether the communities can supply the educated and trained workers they need and whether the region has the transportation and communication infrastructure to deliver their products and to secure the materials and services they need to produce their own goods and services. But tax considerations become more important when businesses are choosing between a few nearby communities. And most schools in the 500 school districts in Pennsylvania are geographically small, thus offering businesses a choice to locate in low-tax rate school districts without losing the benefits of locating in a certain geographic area.9

The unwillingness and inability of local school districts to raise revenues to make up for the lack of state funding results in a $4.6 billion shortfall in the total school spending needed to provide an adequate education to all of Pennsylvania’s students.

This estimate of the inadequacy of school funding in the state is based on a 2020 update to the “Costing-Out Study” carried out by Augenblick, Palaich and Associates (APA) at the request of the Pennsylvania Budget and Policy Center (PBPC) in collaboration with the Office of Budget and Management (OBM) of the Pennsylvania Department of Administration and the Pennsylvania Department of Education. The previous edition of the study was done in 1998 by the Pennsylvania Auditor General’s office and the Pennsylvania Auditor General’s office in 2007.

9. These two works show that tax rates become far more important to businesses’ location decisions, the smaller the municipal jurisdictions are: Paul Peterson, City Limits, University of Chicago Press, 1981 and James O’Connor, The Fiscal Crisis of the State, St. Martin’s Press, 1973.
State Board of Education pursuant to the bipartisan Act 114 of July 2005. The goal of the study was to “arrive at a determination of the basic cost per pupil to provide an education that will permit a student to meet the state’s academic standards.” As required by Act 114, APA used a number of standard methods to carry out the study, including

- the successful school district approach (determination of a base cost from current spending by successful districts).
- the professional judgment approach (determination of the resources identified as necessary by panels of Pennsylvania educators with adjustments for district size and special needs students).
- the evidence-based approach (academic research and responses to it by Pennsylvania educators and other citizens).
- the cost function approach (statistical analysis of spending and performance data).

The APA Costing-Out Study was released in December 2007. In 2020, Professor Matthew Kelley of the Penn State College of Education updated the results to take account of inflation in education costs.

Professor Kelly’s analysis shows not only how severe the overall shortfall in K-12 education spending is but documents the impact of that shortfall on Pennsylvania’s students and school districts:

- 86% of students attend school districts that are not adequately funded under Pennsylvania state law.
- 277 Pennsylvania districts need over $2,000 more per student to provide an adequate education.

For these reasons, Pennsylvania’s over-reliance on local school districts to fund schools also leads to great disparities between school districts based on the income and wealth of the community in which those school districts are found. Pennsylvania has a greater disparity in school spending than any other state. Affluent districts spend 33% more per pupil than the state’s poorest districts. Assuming

11. The adequacy data we report in this paper does not take into account the increase in BEF in the current year budget. We will update this report with the new data soon. But a preliminary report suggests that there is little change in both the statewide and school district adequacy targets, largely, because of the impact of inflation on the cost of education.
12. Data from the National Center for Education Statistics found at https://nces.ed.gov/edfin/Fy11_12_tables.asp. Also see https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/local/wp/2015/03/12/in-23-states-richer-school-districts-get-more-local-funding-than-poorer-districts/?utm_term=.54a7f95dfead. State rankings shift from year to year vary depending on the methodology used. o in some years Pennsylvania’s ranking is higher. In 2018, for example, a study by the Education Trust showed that, when taking into account the needs of students living in poverty, Pennsylvania’s schools were the seventh most inequitably funded in the country. See the Education Trust, The State of Funding Equity in Pennsylvania. A comprehensive examination of how Pennsylvania schools compare to schools in other states with regard to providing opportunity to different groups of students concludes that Pennsylvania ranks 49th with regard to the gap in opportunities between Black and white students, 50th with regard to the gap between Hispanic and white students, and 49th with regard to the gap between students who are eligible for a free or reduced price lunch and those who are not eligible, a proxy
a class size of 33 students, the data we present below suggest that the wealthiest school districts are spending $94,427 more per classroom than the lowest-spending districts. As we shall see, these inequities also have a racial and ethnic dimension as schools primarily attended by Black and Hispanic children are funded at lower levels than those attended by white children.

**The Unfair Distribution of State Support for K-12 schools**

The impact of decline in the state share of funding for K-12 education on inequity in school funding is compounded by a second problem—for decades, the state has been funding local school districts with little regard to the varying needs of those districts or the students who attend schools in them.

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania attempted to fairly distribute state aid to its 500 local school districts in only three of the 21 years between 1993 and 2014. Only between 2008 and 2011, under Governor Rendell, was state aid distributed according to a formula that aimed to invest more in the school districts that needed the most state aid. Governor Corbett and the General Assembly abandoned this funding plan in 2011-12. That year, and in the next three, the General Assembly distributed basic education funds with four different formulas, none of which were focused on providing more funds to the school districts with the greatest need. The consequence was that under Governor Corbett, the General Assembly adopted basic education funding plans that most deeply cut funding to school districts in southeastern PA and in the small cities around the state with high shares of Black and Hispanic students and students from low-income homes.

Aside from three years under Governor Rendell, between 1993 and 2016, the state made little effort to systematically adapt funding to: changes in the number of students in each school district, the needs of those students, the ability of school districts to raise funds locally, or the effort they made to raise those funds. In most of those years, state funds equal to the amount appropriated the previous year were distributed as they were that year—with new funds added—in response to the demands of powerful state legislators and the governor. Legislators who represented districts with a large share of students from low-income homes or with a large share of Black or Hispanic students rarely had the political influence to secure higher levels of funding for the school districts they represented.

In 2015, the General Assembly adopted a fair funding formula that went into effect for the first time in the 2015-16 budget. This formula distributes basic education funding on the basis of a number of factors, including the number of students in each district—the average daily membership (ADM). The ADM, however, is weighted by two factors: the number of students living in poverty and the number of students whose language is not English. These weights are justified on the grounds that it costs more to provide an adequate education to students who have grown up in poverty or not speaking English. The formula also adjusts school district funding to account for two other factors. One is the tax base of each school district. The rationale for this adjustment is that school districts in wealthy communities can more easily raise revenue for school locally and thus need less support from the state. The second additional factor is the tax effort of each school district—that is how much it taxes local residents relative to their wealth. The rationale for this factor is that school districts in communities that are willing to tax themselves more should also be rewarded with additional state funding.


While the new funding formula went into effect for fiscal year 2015-16, as figure 3 shows, it applied only to new money added to BEF from the previous year, shown as the brown part of each bar in figure 3. Most of BEF funding continued to be distributed as it was in the 2014-15 year, shown as the dark blue part of each bar in figure 3. The continued use of the 2014-15 funding distribution was designed to “hold harmless” school districts that might suffer from large declines in school funding if all funds were distributed through the fair funding formula. The result, however, is that only a small portion of BEF was initially distributed in 2015-16 and the subsequent year through the formula—and even in the current year, only 23% of BEF is distributed through the formula. Slightly more than 76% of BEF is thus distributed in ways that do not reflect the needs of students or the financial status or tax effort of school districts. As we shall see below, that is simply not enough money through the fair funding formula to reduce the hard and morally unsupportable inequities in school funding with regard to poverty, race, and ethnicity. The hold harmless practice results in some school districts receiving more (and in some cases, far more) than they would receive under the fair funding formula while others receive much less. Given enough money and time, enough of the BEF would be distributed through the fair funding formula to reduce those inequities. But it would take billions of dollars—more than necessary to eliminate inadequate funding as a whole—and decades to distribute school funding according to need.

**Figure 3**

In recognition of the limited progress being made in reducing school funding by simply distributing more BEF through the fair funding formula, school funding advocates proposed in 2021 that some portion of new funding be distributed to the most underfunded school districts. This program, named “Level Up,” was championed by Representative Mike Schlossberg and other members of the Democratic caucus in the Pennsylvania House.

As a result, $100 million of new funding was distributed to the 100 most-underfunded school districts in 2021-22. This new funding was then added to their baseline BEF. Governor Wolf proposed additional Level Up funding for the current fiscal year and the General Assembly added $225 million in Level Up funding again for the 100 least-well-funded school districts in addition to the $525 million in new BEF funding distributed through the fair funding formula. Additional Level Up funding does help reduce inequity in K-12 school funding, but as we turn to the data on inequity in school funding...
we will see that the state still has a long way to go to reduce the inequity and inadequacy of school funding.

**Inadequacy and Inequity in K-12 School Funding in Pennsylvania**

In this section of the policy brief, we document the inadequacy and inequity of school funding in the state. We measure the adequacy of funding by looking at the gap in per-student spending in school districts between what they spent in 2021-22 and will spend in 2022-23 and what they should spend according to the 2020 update of the Costing-Out Study.

The following charts divide school districts into four groups, each of which contains school districts that include one-quarter of the K-12 students taught in the Commonwealth. The groups vary depending on the share of students who are Black or Hispanic or in the share of children who live in poverty. For each group, we give the average per-student funding gap; that is the average difference between the per-student cost of giving students in these school districts an adequate education and the current per-student spending in these school districts.

**Poverty**

Figure 4 presents the funding gap for school districts grouped by the share of children living in poverty. School districts with the highest share of children living in poverty had a funding gap of $3,519 per student in 2021-22. This will be reduced to $2,750 in 2022-23. School districts with the next-highest share of children living in poverty have a funding gap of $2,217 in 2021-22, which will be reduced to $1,922 in 2022-23. For the third quartile, the funding gap was $1,477 in 2021-22 and will be $1,311 in 2022-23. And for the quartile of school districts with the lowest share of children living in poverty, the funding gap was $701 in 2021-22 and will be $612 in 2022-23.

While the average funding gap for school districts with the lowest share of students living in poverty is substantial, some of those school districts do have an adequate level of funding. But in the state, as a whole, only 79 of 500 school districts—or about 16% of school districts—have an adequate level of funding. A bit more than 84% of school districts, which includes some with a low share of children living in poverty, spend too little to provide an adequate education to their students. So, while the gap between the level of funding needed to provide an adequate education and what is actually provided is far greater for school districts located in communities with a higher share of children living in poverty, there is, on average, a funding gap even in the school districts with a low share of children living in poverty.

---

14. The four groups do not include the same number of school districts because the student population in school districts varies considerably. So, these data are not comparable to data found in our analyses of school district funding in past years, which divided all school districts into four quartiles of 125. A full explanation of how we create these quintiles can be found in: Eugene Henninger-Voss, *Uncovering Pennsylvania’s School Funding Disparity*, Pennsylvania Budget and Policy Center, November 11, 2021.

15. The estimates of the per-student cost of an adequate education adequacy were provided to us by the Public Interest Law Center, which hired Dr. Kelley to update the APA Costing-Out Study. The calculations of the per-district funding gap in both 2021-22 and 2022-23 were produced by Eugene Henninger-Voss using the KRC-PBPC PA K-12 Education Funding Model. Details about the model are available from the Keystone Research Center and PA Budget and Policy Center.

Figure 4 shows that the addition of $525 million in BEF and $225 million in Level Up funding does reduce inequity in school funding. But the remaining inequity is still substantial. The gap between the school districts with the highest share of students living in poverty and those with the lowest share of students living in poverty has been reduced by almost $700 from $2,818 to $2,138. But the remaining gap is still deeply troubling, especially when one remembers that this is a per-student gap. In a class with 30 students, the gap is $63,000.

Race

Figure 5 presents the funding gap for school districts grouped by the share of Black students. School districts with the highest share of Black students had a funding gap of $2,999 per student in 2021-22. This will be reduced to $2,392 in 2022-23. School districts with the next-highest share of Black children have a funding gap of $1,886 in 2021-22 which will be reduced to $1,540 in 2022-23. For the third quartile, the funding gap was $1,532 in 2021-22 and will be $1,320 in 2022-23. And for the quartile of school districts with the lowest share of Black children, the funding gap was $1,497 in 2021-22 and will be $1,332 in 2022-23.

Again, we find that the average funding gap for school districts with the lowest share of Black students is significant. But when only 79 of 500 school districts statewide have an adequate level of funding, even the school districts with the lowest share of Black students will be underfunded on average.
Figure 5 shows that the addition of $525 million in BEF and $225 million in Level Up funding does reduce racial inequity in school funding. But the remaining inequity is still substantial. The gap between the school districts with the highest share of Black students and those with the lowest share of Black students has been reduced by about $500 from $1,502 to $1,060. However, the remaining gap is still morally unsustainable.

**Hispanic Ethnicity**

Figure 6 presents the funding gap for school districts grouped by the share of Hispanic students. School districts with the highest share of Hispanic students had a funding gap of $3,632 per student in 2021-22. This will be reduced to $2,954 in 2022-23. School districts with the next-highest share of Hispanic children have a funding gap of $1,592 in 2021-22 which will be reduced to $1,344 in 2022-23. For the third quartile, the funding gap was $1,085 in 2021-22 and will be $905 in 2022-23. And for the quartile of school districts with the lowest share of Hispanic children, the funding gap was $1,605 in 2021-22 and will be $1,392 in 2022-23.

Again, we find that the average funding gap for school districts with even the lowest share of Hispanic students living is high. But, when only 79 of 500 school districts statewide have an adequate level of funding, these school districts will necessarily be underfunded on average.
Figure 6 shows that the addition of $525 million in BEF and $225 million in Level Up funding does reduce racial inequity in school funding. But the remaining inequity is still substantial. The gap between the school districts with the highest share of Hispanic students and those with the lowest share of Hispanic students has been reduced by $465 from $2,027 to $1,562.

Property Taxes

When state funding for local schools is inadequate, local school districts try to make up for it by raising local taxes. For most school districts that means property taxes. So for this update on school funding, we want to discuss the contentious property tax issue as well.

As we have seen, many school districts cannot raise local taxes because they have a limited tax base. And others do not do so because they do not have the political will to do so or fear the loss of residents and businesses who could move to nearby communities with lower taxes. Other school districts cannot raise property taxes or because doing so would violate Act 1, which was enacted in 2006 to limit increases in local taxes to the rate of inflation. 17

17. The Act 1 inflation index is an average of the statewide average weekly wage and the Federal employment cost index for elementary and secondary schools.

Each year school districts must limit their property tax increases to the Act 1 index rate unless the voters approve a referendum to exceed that rate or the school district receives a waiver from the Department of Education. Waivers are granted if the extra tax rate increase is needed to cover the local share of existing or new debt, increases in the cost of special education greater than the district’s adjusted index, or increase in pension costs attributable to an increase in the required employer contribution rate. Typically about 30% of districts are granted a waiver.

The Act 1 inflation index is adjusted for some districts by another factor, the market value / personal income aid ratio (MV/PI AR). The MV/PI AR is the ratio of the market value of properties in a school district compared to that of the state as a whole to the personal income per student in a school compared to the state as whole. The lower the value of the ratio, the wealthier the school district is. If a school district has a MV/PI Aid Ratio above .4, the Act 1 index for the district is the statewide index multiplied by the sum of .75 and the MV/PR Aid Ratio. For example, if the base index is 2.4% and
The school districts that do not raise local taxes suffer from the inequity in school funding we have already discussed. And, indeed, many of those that do have high property tax rates still suffer from inequity because their limited tax base make it impossible for them to raise enough revenue to make up for the lack of state funding.

The school districts that do raise local taxes, however, often suffer from another problem—high property taxes that are especially burdensome for families with low or fixed incomes.

The impact of state funding on local school taxes can be seen in figure 7. Note that during the period from 1999-00 to 2007-08, state and federal revenue per student grew more slowly (18% over the period) while local revenue per student increased faster (26% over the period). Then, between 2007-08 to 2010-11 during the Great Recession, state and federal revenue per student increased faster (15% over the period) while local revenue per student was almost stagnant (growing only 1% over the period.) As it should have, during this period of deep economic difficulty initially the state government and then the federal government provided substantial new aid to help local schools. This allowed school funding to increase without an increase in local property taxes. But in the next period, from 2010-11 to 2014-15, state and federal revenue per student dropped by 4% which led to an increase in local revenue per student (of 7% over the four years). While we have not carried this time series further, it seems clear that the relatively slow increase in state aid until the current fiscal year has led to faster increases in local property taxes.

Some voters and their representatives in Harrisburg often, and rightly, complain about high property taxes. Table 1 shows, however, that property taxes in the state as a whole are not that high relative to

the school district's MV/PI AR is 0.6000, the school district's adjusted index is $2.4\% \times (0.75 + 0.6000) = 3.2\%$. This adjustment allows less wealthy school districts to raise property taxes above the Act 1 index. Of course, that does not necessarily mean such school districts do so because many of them are already highly taxed and cannot raise taxes higher.
other states. In 2015, property taxes as a percentage of income were 3% in Pennsylvania, lower than in New Jersey and New York and about the same as Maryland.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Median Family Income</th>
<th>Median Home Value</th>
<th>Median Real Estate Tax</th>
<th>Property Taxes as a % of Home Values¹</th>
<th>Property Taxes as Percentage of Income²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Delaware</td>
<td>$91,122</td>
<td>$231,500</td>
<td>$1,243</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maryland</td>
<td>$115,323</td>
<td>$286,900</td>
<td>$3,142</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Jersey</td>
<td>$116,367</td>
<td>$315,900</td>
<td>$7,410</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>$102,899</td>
<td>$283,400</td>
<td>$4,600</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>$82,042</td>
<td>$129,900</td>
<td>$2,032</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
<td>$84,999</td>
<td>$166,000</td>
<td>$2,533</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Virginia</td>
<td>$63,900</td>
<td>$103,800</td>
<td>$607</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: ¹Median property taxes as a percentage of median home values. ²Median property taxes as a percentage of median family income for homeowners

Source: Keystone Research Center analysis of American Community Survey data

The statewide average, however, mask the variation among school districts in property tax rates as a percentage of income which is shown in Figure 8.¹⁸ In the school districts in the arc of counties running from York to Monroe and Pike, property taxes average from 2.8% to 4.8% of income. In much of the rest of the state, however, property taxes are far lower. The high property tax areas tend to be found in growing suburban counties where state funding has not kept up with higher student (ADM) counts. Because so much of the BEF is distributed in the same way it was in 2014-15, higher student counts has not lead to proportionately higher state aid in these areas. Low property tax areas tend to be counties that have lost population but, again because of the hold harmless portion of the BEF, have not lost state funding to the same degree.

¹⁸ A few school districts, including Philadelphia, are treated differently (and marked with small pyramids) because they rely much more heavily on other local taxes than on property taxes. The Philadelphia School District, for example, relies on an intangible wealth tax, a cigarette tax, a sales tax, and a business use and occupancy tax as well as the property tax. Even though its property taxes are relatively low, Philadelphia’s local tax effort ranks in the twenties among the 500 school district in the state.
High property taxes in some parts of the state and inadequate and inequitable K-12 school funding are two separate problems. But they are related. The low level of state funding for K-12 schools is ultimately responsible for both problems. Raising that level of funding would thus help reduce both problems.

**Conclusion**

The inequity in how we fund our schools, not to mention the inadequacy of that funding, has been a moral scandal for a long time. And while white students suffer as much as Black and Hispanic students do from this inequity, we should recognize that white supremacy is partly responsible for the economic as well as racial inequity in our schools. Here, as in other areas of public policy, opponents to proposals to raise taxes on the well-off to fund programs that provide equal opportunity for working people have been attacked both implicitly and explicitly in racist terms, by those who falsely assert that these proposals mostly benefit Black and brown people. One does not have to spend much time in Harrisburg to hear representatives and senators talk about how they won’t “raise taxes on their constituents in order to send money to schools in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh,” even though proposals to make taxes more progressive, such as those Governor Wolf has put forward, actually cut taxes for most of their constituents. And when such implicit racism is not enough, there are legislators who say out loud what others are thinking.¹⁹

Behind the numbers in this dry presentation are our children—children upon whom the future of our commonwealth and country depends. The vast majority of those children—white, Black, and brown children—do not receive an education that enables them to make the best use of their God-given talents and abilities. The equality of opportunity that is central to our ideals—and that is embedded in the Pennsylvania Constitution’s guarantee of an adequate education for our children—suffers. The future economy of Pennsylvania also suffers.

---

And most of all, far too many of our children suffer from this injustice. It is time for the General Assembly to take a major step toward addressing this horrible injustice and ensure that all our children get the education they deserve.