



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Report Details PA's Neediest Schools Shorted in Distribution of COVID CARES Act Funding

HARRISBURG-- If Congress acts in the next few weeks, local K-12 schools are considered the state and local government entities most likely to receive additional federal relief. Today's released report examines how Pennsylvania distributed the K-12 funding within earlier rounds of federal relief. It focuses on funding from the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) that the federal government left up to states to allocate among school districts- \$174 million.

One would have expected these funds to be distributed using the state's Basic Education Funding (BEF) formula, enacted in 2015, to ensure that future additions to school funding in Pennsylvania get distributed fairly. However, the legislature and the Wolf administration agreed on an alternative approach: a fixed amount per district plus distribution of the remaining funds based on districts' numbers of students (average daily membership or ADM), not taking into account the variables (like poverty) that the BEF formula recognizes, based on research, that makes some students more expensive to educate.

Of the report's findings author Diana Polson, Senior Researcher, Keystone Research Center said, "In light of the nation's heightened awareness in the year 2020 of inequality, especially racial injustice, these are stunning findings. No matter what the intentions or logic behind the distribution of this funding, its impact is clear: schools with the highest density of poor, Black, and Hispanic students received less funding than those with the least density, further entrenching existing inequities."

The formula used to distribute the funds had a dramatic negative impact on students with the most poor students and the most students of color:

- Districts in the poorest districts (that educate a quarter of state students) received \$36 million, compared to the \$90 million they would have received using the BEF. Meanwhile the richest districts received more than the poorest--\$41 million.
- Districts with the largest share of Black students (that educate a quarter of state students) received \$34 million while districts with the smallest share of Black students received far more—\$55 million. Using the BEF, districts with the highest density of Black students would have received \$76 million.
- Districts with the highest density of Hispanic students received \$33 million, far below the \$82 million they would have received using the BEF.

Susan Spicka of Education Voters PA added, "Inadequate public education funding has been a longstanding and devastating problem in Pennsylvania, particularly in communities of color and areas of concentrated poverty. If the state has discretion over additional federal aid to schools, it must be distributed in a way that does not shortchange districts that are struggling the most. And in 2021, state lawmakers must make a commitment to leveling-up funding for districts that have the fewest resources available to meet their students' needs."

Speakers in today's press event included:

- Stephen Herzenberg, Executive Director, Keystone Research Center
- Susan Spicka, Education Voters of PA
- Stephen Rodriguez, Superintendent Pottstown School District and President of the PLUS Caucus of the Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators

Report and related documents can be found [here](#).

Presentation Recording:

https://krc-pbpc-org.zoom.us/rec/share/DFyIBB96JNvKJJ8Z4ech36-K-nHL_jRxH3cb8T0uS2fRhxDwXiR3RUIDL5Yej-w.ZcCfrjDNfFsAFSut

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