

Speech Presented at Senator Hughes' Press Conference on Funding Plan at
Plymouth Meeting High School

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Thank you, Senator Hughes for the opportunity to speak this morning and for your leadership in proposing this bold plan to reimagine education for PA's public-school students.

Good morning, everyone. My name is Tomea Sippio-Smith. I am the Education Policy Director at the child advocacy organization, Children First – an organization that fights for and supports policies that ensure access to healthcare and high-quality education for our region's children.

This year, we have an unprecedented opportunity to invest in the education of our children – from the earliest years until graduation from high school. We have a surplus that can be used to close education gaps for students once and for all. It is absurd that PA ranks 45th in the nation for state contribution to education funding.

All children in PA have the right to a high-quality public education. This isn't just an opinion. The PA constitution guarantees all public students access to a thorough and efficient education.

We know this and we know that PA fails far too many children across this state because their schools are underfunded and under-resourced. In fact, most of PA's students attend schools that do not receive adequate funding from the state. \$4.6 billion less than they need.

That's why 6 school districts, parents and organizations representing rural, urban and suburban school districts struggling to give students a solid educational foundation took the state to court in the fair funding lawsuit.

Students in school districts across the state are lacking the tools, services and resources to support our students – especially poor students and students of color. Our leaders in Harrisburg have created a school funding system where the students who need the most get the least, because of where they live

Yet, they think our students will graduate with the skills they need to go to college or their careers. Without, the tools, services and resources to succeed, they will not leave high school prepared for 21st century jobs that provide life-sustaining and solid wages. These are our children and our grandchildren we are talking about. **OUR FUTURE.**

This is unacceptable and today we can do something about it. We can act to thoroughly and efficiently, equitably and adequately fund our schools.

Sen. Hughes plan significantly increases the pie for all school districts by running \$1.1 billion more into the Fair Funding Formula:

- Expanding the level-up supplement to get millions more to the districts with the greatest shortfalls
- Money to ensure students attend healthy schools, support their mental health and get students who need the help academic tools to grow their skills.

These last two years have been challenging. And they have truly taken a toll on our children. To grow up to be happy, healthy and successful adults, we've got to do more to help them get there. That means we must take the opportunity we have now and use it to adequately and equitably fund our schools.

Link to event photos: <https://www.flickr.com/gp/pasenedems/e28t54>