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Parents and Advocates to PA State Legislature: Pass a Budget for our Kids

HARRISBURG, PA (August 25th, 2015) – The eight week long budget impasse is creating uncertainty for schools and frustrating parents. At a rally in the Capitol Rotunda, parents and education advocates made it clear that a budget that invests \$410 million in new funding for schools is needed now to ensure a smooth start to the school year.

“Our students are preparing to go back to school filled with uncertainty,” said Shanee Garner, Education Policy Director for Public Citizens for Children and Youth. “It’s not fair to our students, parents or our schools to continue to wait while Harrisburg continues to drag its feet on passing the budget.”

Dozens of parents and education advocates visited their local legislators in the Capitol on Tuesday to let them know that the budget is punishing schools by forcing them to make painful decisions to survive the budget crisis.

“It is imperative that legislators hear that we as parents want a budget with significant investments in public education to be passed immediately,” said Sekela Coles, a Councilperson from Upper Darby and mother of two children in the Upper Darby School District. “Local school districts, who are already doing more with less due to unfair constraints such as charter school payments, cannot afford to front expenses because our state legislators are either unwilling or unable to compromise. All of our children deserve so much more. Legislators please get to work for their sake.”

Congreso de Latinos Unidos, Inc., a multi-service organization based in Philadelphia, is already feeling the pain caused by the budget impasse. The organization plans to cut employee salaries by 40%, issue furloughs for 11 employees, and provide less afterschool programs for children starting on September 1st.

“The stalemate in Harrisburg is hitting home for everyone in the Congreso family,” said Cynthia Figueroa, President & CEO of Congreso de Latinos Unidos, Inc. “We desperately need the Legislature to approve a budget as soon as possible and take steps now to ensure vulnerable Pennsylvanians do not suffer during negotiations.”

Pennsylvania has the most inequitable school funding system in the country. Cuts made to education in 2010 disproportionately hurt low-income and minority school districts. Speakers



at Tuesday's rally said that restoring the cuts and implementing a fair and adequate funding formula for future state aid will begin to level the playing field between schools.

"Our children have suffered long enough from cuts to education. They've seen valuable resources like certified librarians, art, music and counseling services taken away," Said Carol Heinsdorf, a public school librarian. "It's time to reverse this awful trend and begin to restore essential learning programs so our children receive a great education regardless of where they live."

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