

A RESOLUTION CALLING FOR FAIR AND ADEQUATE FUNDING OF PUBLIC EDUCATION IN PENNSYLVANIA

WHEREAS: As Christians we believe: (1) that God desires for children the life abundant which comes from the fullest development of their gifts — physical, intellectual, social and spiritualⁱ; (2) all people should be educated and empowered, to the extent possible, so that they can enjoy the benefits of economic opportunity; and (3) “The health and strength of our nation depends on the ability of its citizens to understand issues and to treat each other with respect.”ⁱⁱ; and

WHEREAS: Our public schools are the primary institution where we have agreed to nurture and shape God's precious children; and

WHEREAS: We believe all children can achieve high standards if given the opportunity, and that all children must enjoy the educational opportunities we desire for our own children and grandchildren; and

WHEREAS: Jesus proclaimed that the greatest law calls us to love God with our whole being, and a second like it is calls us to love our neighbors as ourselves; and

WHEREAS: Loving our neighbor means that we are called to address injustices in our public education system, rooting out patterns of discrimination that impact the ability of specific populations to receive fair and adequate quality education, including fair, progressive tax structures that provide for fair and adequate funding for all students and schools; and

WHEREAS: The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania is responsible for providing a thorough and efficient education to every child, as embodied in Pennsylvania’s Constitution, which says: “The General Assembly shall provide for the maintenance and support of a thorough and efficient system of public education to serve the needs of the Commonwealth” (Sec. 14); and

WHEREAS: Pennsylvania’s elected officials have consistently violated the Pennsylvania Constitution by failing to align funding with the high standards students are expected to meet; and

WHEREAS: There is a wide gap between what the highest and lowest spending school districts in Pennsylvania spend per pupil; and

WHEREAS: There is a striking disparity in local school taxes, with the poorest school districts paying the highest tax rates. Despite the high rates, these districts still do not have adequate funding to ensure high quality education for all students; and

WHEREAS: Pennsylvania does not offer some type of state-financed preschool program.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT

RESOLVED (1): The Pennsylvania Council of Churches supports the principles of the Campaign for Fair Education Fundingⁱⁱⁱ, which include:

- **Accuracy is important**—The new system must be based on real costs necessary to meet state academic standards and must use accurate, reliable, verifiable, and current school and community data that addresses factors including poverty, English proficiency, school enrollment, and other objective measures that impact those costs; and
- **Students and schools need stability**—The new system must be transparent, sustainable, equitable, and long-range — and supported with sufficient, stable, and broad-based resources. A new basic education funding system is the foundation for educating all children, including children with special needs who will require additional resources through the special education allocation; and
- **Responsibility is shared**—The new system must operate based on shared fiscal responsibility among the local community, the state, individuals, and commercial taxpayers, recognizing the differing levels of local funding available and the relationship between adequate financial support and student outcomes; and
- **Accountability is required**—The new system must include strong accountability standards to ensure that schools invest efficiently and effectively to boost student achievement and help ensure post-secondary success. These standards also should allow and/or encourage schools to pursue and sustain operational cost-saving and cost-sharing options that are consistent with ongoing efforts to foster student achievement and success.

and be it further

RESOLVED (2): Tax reforms are needed to create a more progressive and equitable system that provides for fair distribution of funds in order to achieve “a thorough and efficient system of public education to serve the needs of the Commonwealth”; and be it further

RESOLVED (3): The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania should provide access to high quality pre-kindergarten and full day kindergarten for all Pennsylvania children “to ensure that all Pennsylvania children are ready to succeed”^{iv}; and be it further

RESOLVED (4): The Council instructs the Director of Advocacy and Ecumenical Outreach to: (a) urge elected officials and policymakers, in cooperation with education professionals, to provide for the fair and adequate distribution of resources to all public schools in Pennsylvania; and (b) communicate this resolution to the Governor of Pennsylvania, the Speaker of the House, the President of the Senate, the chairs of the appropriate House and Senate Committees, and to all Senators and Representatives in Pennsylvania’s General Assembly; and be it further

RESOLVED (5): The Council encourages its member bodies to:

- Seek adherence to denominational resolutions on the support of public education similar to this Resolution;
- Provide educational materials and resources to their congregations to make them aware of, and to educate them about, the benefits of a fair, adequate, and excellent public education; and
- Encourage congregations and individuals to seek enactment of legislation and policies that seek to achieve fair and adequate funding for Pennsylvania’s public schools.

Approved by the Board of Directors of the Pennsylvania Council of Churches on this 13th day of October, 2016.

Rev. Elizabeth L. Bidgood Enders

The Rev. Elizabeth Bidgood Enders, President
Board of Directors
Pennsylvania Council of Churches

ⁱ 1991, United Church of Christ General Synod XVIII Pronouncement, "Support of Quality, Integrated Education for All Children in Public Schools"

ⁱⁱ 5 Laura Sadler Olin, Executive Director of the Lancaster Foundation for Educational Enrichment.

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://fairfundingpa.org/about-us/our-mission/>

^{iv} <https://www.facebook.com/prekforpa/about/>