

## RESOLUTION SUPPORTING EDUCATIONAL FUNDING

WHEREAS, access to quality education is vital to the lives of Pennsylvania's students, enhancing their long-term economic well being and their ability to care for their families, and

WHEREAS, quality education is vital to Pennsylvania's economy, enhancing its ability to attract and retain businesses by creating a well- educated work force; and

WHEREAS, communities unable to offer quality education handicap their students' opportunities to attend college and to compete in the job market, and businesses in those communities find it difficult to obtain qualified employees; and

WHEREAS, all persons throughout Pennsylvania are affected by the inability of numerous school districts across the Commonwealth to be able to afford quality education and the inability of thousands of their students to become proficient in the skills necessary to compete successfully in the global economy; and

WHEREAS, Pennsylvania ranks as the state with the 8th greatest disparities in funding between its highest and lowest spending school districts in the nation according to Education Week, with district spending ranging from \$6,344 to \$16,803 per student for current expenditures; and

WHEREAS, Pennsylvania relies on local taxes for a greater percentage of school funding than any other state except two, with the local tax burden ranging from 10.5 equalized mills to 42 equalized mills; and

WHEREAS, in New Jersey, a state with the identical constitutional clause on education as Pennsylvania's, the Supreme Court has ordered funding for the poorest districts at a level equivalent to the median school funding of the top 20% of the wealthiest districts as necessary to provide a thorough and efficient system of public education as required by the state constitution; and

WHEREAS, there are 284 school districts around the state that have gaps of more than \$2,000 between what they can spend per student and the median for the top 20% of the school districts in the state, and those gaps range from \$2,000 to \$4,450 per student; and

WHEREAS, students in Philadelphia's public schools compete in the same labor market as students from the 61 school districts in the surrounding four Pennsylvania counties but have \$2,054 per student less to spend than the average neighboring district, and \$9,600 less per student than top spending Springfield School District, although Philadelphia's students come on average with greater needs and less out of school support; and

WHEREAS, these gaps prevent students in these poorer districts across Pennsylvania from obtaining the small class sizes, sufficient books, materials and up to date science equipment, well trained teachers, advanced placement classes, and well maintained buildings necessary for academic success that are available in wealthier districts; and

WHEREAS, a report by University of Pennsylvania Professor Emeritus Anita Summers disclosed that Pennsylvania's allocation of state funds to school districts discriminates against the 16 school districts with predominately minority students, and that when the poverty of students is controlled for, the higher the proportion of minority students the less state aid per student a district receives; and

WHEREAS, the thorough and efficient system of public education required by the state Constitution cannot exist with such gross disparities in opportunity for all students depending solely on the wealth of the district where they live or their race; and

WHEREAS, reducing local school property taxes and requiring referenda without ending these disparities will lock in these unequal and highly detrimental spending differences to the unfair disadvantage of predominately low income students from poor rural and urban school districts.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Philadelphia Bar Association urges the General Assembly to enact a system of educational funding consistent with their Constitutional duty, ending the gross disparity currently existing in educational opportunity available to students in Philadelphia and many other districts around the Commonwealth and to enact any local school property tax reduction only as part of a comprehensive educational funding system which ends such unconstitutional disparities.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Chancellor of the Philadelphia Bar Association is authorized to take whatever steps are necessary to effectuate this resolution.

PHILADELPHIA BAR ASSOCIATION

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

ADOPTED: JANUARY 26, 2006