**Proclamation**

(one pager to be read at the vigil)

After three months in the courtroom, witness testimony in Pennsylvania’s historic school funding trial has concluded.

During hundreds of hours of testimony, witnesses made clear that the Pennsylvania state Legislature has failed to fulfill its duties under the education and equal protection provisions of Pennsylvania’s constitution.

The current system is not “thorough” or “efficient” and does not provide a quality education for children in low-wealth districts.

 The gross disparities between districts are irrational and unjustifiable. And they are the direct result of conscious policy and funding choices made by legislative leaders in Harrisburg.

Pennsylvania contributes just 38% of the costs of K-12 education. Only five states cover a smaller share. The national average is 47%.

Because the state share of funding is so low, local wealth shapes everything kids need in school to reach their full potential. Poor school districts can spend $4,800 less per student than wealthy districts. In Pennsylvania, the students who need the most, get the least because of where they live.

According to a benchmark written into state law, public schools need $4.6 billion in additional funding to be able to give all their students a shot at reaching state academic standards. And 277 districts—big cities, small towns, and suburbs across the state—need more than $2,000 in additional funding per student to reach the funding level they need. The state legislature’s failure to fairly fund public schools shortchanges students of all backgrounds, and Black and Latino students are concentrated in the lowest-wealth school districts that are left the furthest behind.

This underfunding isn’t some abstract principle. It determines which kids get what they need, and which kids do not. Local wealth determines which fourth graders get the tutoring they need in reading, which middle schoolers attend school in safe buildings, and which seniors can prepare for college. It is teachers and counselors, nurses and librarians. Computers and STEM labs. Art and music. Smaller class sizes and remedial help for children who are struggling to learn.

When students receive the kind of support that strong, consistent funding can buy, society reaps the rewards. More investment in schools spurs student achievement, which spurs state economic growth. We all have a stake in students across Pennsylvania reaching their full potential.

Simply put, money matters in education. With this lawsuit, we now have an opportunity to positively impact generations of students in Pennsylvania.

Thanks to this trial, we can clearly see how little some Pennsylvania lawmakers value public education.

In court, lawyers for legislative leaders questioned whether it really mattered if kids on what they called “the McDonald's career track” could reach state academic standards. They even said their only job was to provide desks and keep the lights on!

Today we are letting our lights shine bright across the commonwealth because fair education funding isn’t about paying the electric bill, it’s about building brighter futures for our children!

Let’s take a moment to mark the end of this historic trial and rededicate ourselves to the education justice movement in Pennsylvania and fighting for the school funding Pennsylvania’s students need and deserve.