

Special Education Coalition to Release Groundbreaking “Costing Out” Study

Special education funding across the Commonwealth falls short of “adequate” annual funding levels by more than \$400 million, according to a major new study. This study, entitled “Costing Out the Resources for Special Education in Pennsylvania” is authored by Augenblick, Palaich and Associates of Colorado, the same authors of the much-hailed “Costing-Out Study” commissioned by the PA General Assembly in 2007. The newly released study is being characterized as a much-needed follow-up to ‘07 report because of the complexities of special education. It was commissioned by The Arc of Pennsylvania, the Education Law Center of PA and the Disability Rights Network of Pennsylvania.

Representatives of the sponsoring agencies and 35 other endorsing organizations will join report authors in three press events and advocacy planning discussions on Wednesday, February 11 across the state. At each meeting, members will discuss the contents of the report and answer questions about the funding needs in the budget and reform legislation needed in the state legislature. The press event locations are as follows:

Harrisburg

108 Irvis Office Building
State Capitol
10:00 AM

Pittsburgh

The Arc of Greater Pittsburgh/ACHIEVA
711 Bingham Street, Pittsburgh
4:00 PM

Philadelphia

Community College of Philadelphia
Center for Industry and Commerce
18th and Callowhill Street
Philadelphia
3:00 PM

The report, using a formula developed in the 2007 report to the General Assembly, determined that statewide special education funding shortfall is \$444.8 million annually. About 15% (1 out of 7) of PA students are educated with special education funding.

In response to the study, the sponsors are calling on state policymakers to ensure:

- Adequate funding for special education.
- Appropriate “carrots and sticks” to motivate school districts to reduce unnecessary segregation of students with disabilities from their peers without disabilities and improve academic success.

- Greater accountability and oversight of special education funding to ensure students with disabilities are being properly prepared for adult life in their community.

On Thursday, February 12, 2009, the report authors will testify before the PA House Education Committee's Subcommittee on Special Education, chaired by Representative Barbara McIlvaine Smith. The hearing will take place at 9:00 AM in Room 218 of the Main Capitol Building.

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