

The Assembly Education Committee will be conducting hearings on A4060 which calls for a new costing out process at **2pm on Monday March 12, 2007 in Room 16, 4th floor** of the State House 125 West State Street, Trenton.

1. **To testify**, simply show up and sign in with the Office of Legislative Services staff member who will be there (early arrival suggested).

2.. **See below "Answers to FAQs"** about the bill. It may help you to develop your testimony or when speaking with the press.

2. **If you plan to testify or attend, please let Leslie Hirsch of ELC know** (lhirsch@edlawcenter.org. 973-624-1815, Ext. 15) ELC will be sending a representative to speak on its own behalf - and, of course, cite its involvement with OC/OS.

OUR CHILDREN/OUR SCHOOLS

Answers to FAQs About A4060 for March 12, 2007 Testimony

What does OC/OS have to say about A4060?

Our Children/Our Schools sees the new cost study required under A4060 to be an absolute prerequisite for developing a school funding formula that will enable all children in New Jersey to receive a high-quality education regardless of where they live or what special needs they have.

Campaign members encourage other Members of the Assembly to sign on as co-sponsors, and urging State Senators to introduce a mirror version of the bill.

We would like to acknowledge the leadership shown by Assembly Members Stack and Stanley as sponsors of the bill and of co-sponsors Hackett, Manzo, Pou, and Voss.

A4060 will require the legislature to hire independent experts to conduct a study that to determine the resources and costs of educating *all* students to meet State academic standards, including low-income students, students with disabilities, and English language learners.

We agree with A4060 that a new effort to determine the cost basis for a school funding formula – that is worthy of the great State of New Jersey and the high quality education we all would like to see in our public schools – should differ from the the NJDOE's study, conducted in 2002-03 and released to the public in December of 2006 in the following key ways. It should:

- 1) *Use real numbers not hypotheticals.* The new study should be based on the characteristics of *actual* – not hypothetical – urban, rural, suburban and charter schools and districts in New Jersey.
- 2) *Include programs that are already required for at-risk youth.* The new study must factor in the cost of providing programs and services for low-income students and districts with concentrations of poverty, at least consistent with the requirements under Abbott v. Burke.
- 3) *Consider the cost of compliance with existing law.* The new study must include resources and costs needed to comply with state and federal law, such as the requirements currently placed upon schools and districts under the Adequate Yearly Progress provisions of No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).
- 4) *Extend the equity commitments embodied in Abbott.* The study should recommend how to sustain, build upon, and improve the programs, reforms and accountability measures established by the Abbott decisions for Abbott districts and other districts deemed educationally inadequate by the State Board of Education or the Legislature.
- 5) *Determine costs involved in providing the highest-quality education.* The study should examine what is required support a high quality education in the most

successful school districts in our state, such as the suburban “I&J” districts, and other evidence of best educational practices from panels of educators and stakeholders.

- 6) *Not be conducted behind closed doors.* The study absolutely must include a “transparent and public process to obtain input from educators, parents, and the public,” including but not limited to public hearings in communities throughout the state.

Finally, we understand that this new study must be completed no later than December 31, 2007 if it is to be a useful for a school funding formula in FY 2009.

We respectfully encourage the Committee to move quickly to consider this bill, vote in support of it, and encourage the speedy passage of a similar bill through the Senate so that it can go to the Governor as soon as possible.

On the NJDOE reorganization

Given the past performance and crucial role of the NJDOE in implementing the education afforded by a fair and equitable new school funding formula, we also strongly suggest that the State move forward with the independent review of the DOE provided for by the legislature in JR#3.

We are especially concerned that the recent "reorganization" of the DOE does not sufficiently integrate the fiscal and program aspects of providing adequate educational services or address the State's capacity to carry out state and federal education law or the growing need for the State to take a capacity building role with the districts.

We cannot continue to function – and expect to see positive outcomes for the kids – with the kind of fragmented, command and control Department that we have had for many years.

Other Useful Information

Introductions

Thank Chairman Stanley and the other members of the committee for receiving your testimony.

Introduce yourself, your organizational affiliation (and/or place of residence if you are testifying as a parent).

Don't forget to identify yourself as a member (or if appropriate, friend) of the Our Children/Our Schools campaign.

What is the Our Children/Our Schools Campaign?

We are a group of advocacy, civil rights, and taxpayer organizations and New Jersey residents. We came together to influence the State's efforts to revamp the school funding formula in a positive way. OC/OS supports school funding that will enable New Jersey to provide a high-quality public education to all children no matter where they live and what their special needs may be. In particular, OC/OS works to ensure that the State uphold its equity commitments embodied in the *Abbott v. Burke* decisions. Finally, OC/OS supports the development of accountability mechanisms at the state and local levels that will ensure that dollars are spent in the most effective and efficient manner to meet our children's educational needs.

Other documents you can consult:

OC/OS Principles

OC/OS Answers to FAQs

What is OC/OS doing to accomplish its goals?

Over the past several months, OC/OS members have worked together in a variety of ways to support a better school funding formula including:

- Testify at public hearings
- Host a statewide Education Summit entitled "Extending the Promise of Abbott to all of New Jersey's Children" attended by over 200 education stakeholders
- Communicating our concerns with elected and appointed officials about our concerns
- Through meetings, and teleconferences: sharing information and analyses of developments in school funding and property tax reform

We are also co-hosting a PEI forum next Monday, March 19 entitled *The Cost of an adequate education in New Jersey: Where Do We Go from Here?* You will see from the flyer that the panel will include some of the nation's most knowledgeable academics and advocates on the subject of school finance.