



CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

CITY COUNCIL

Isaiah Thomas
Council Member, At-Large
City Hall, Room 330
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Good afternoon,

My name is Councilmember Isaiah Thomas and I am an At-Large member of Philadelphia City Council. Thank you to the Basic Education Funding Commission for holding this important hearing today to discuss this crucial issue. As the chair of Philadelphia City Council's Education Committee, and as a former educator myself, I feel a higher responsibility to our city's young people. I am here today to urge a total, efficient review of the Commonwealth's funding formula.

Philadelphia City Council remains a steadfast supporter of our students, and have over each of the past eight years increased the School District's funding. Year in and year out we hear from School District leadership, educators, staff, students, and families that our city's schools desperately need more money— and we listen.

Early this year, Commonwealth Court President Judge Renée Cohn Jubelirer released her landmark decision in the fair funding lawsuit. The decision, almost 800 pages, lays out what Philadelphians have known for a long while: the Commonwealth's funding formula is unconstitutional and blatantly limits access to opportunity for the Districts' predominantly Black and brown students.

Let me be clear: this is an equity issue. By basing our school funding on property taxes, we are encouraging the historic disinvestment in our schools. The fair funding lawsuit makes it clear we can no longer rely on this method. I am glad the court has recognized this historic inequity. Now it is time to act.

The City of Philadelphia puts up roughly half of the Philadelphia School District's funding. Philadelphia ranks 232nd out of 499 school districts in per-student spending. Philadelphia School District is the largest district in the Commonwealth, nearly 6 times larger than the second largest. For a District so large, in a city rife with so many issues affecting our young people, that is upsetting and it must change.

Concrete targets must be set to identify what Philadelphia and districts across the Commonwealth need. City Council has done and will continue to do everything we can to secure fair funding for our young people. City Council and the Education Committee, the School District, and the School Board are committed to ensuring our students and families can learn and grow in the City of Philadelphia.

Thank you to the Basic Education Funding Commission for providing the platform to discuss this important issue.