
Our Children/Our Schools Campaign

Press Release *For Immediate Release*

Trenton, New Jersey – November 30, 2007. Our Children/Our Schools (OC/OS), a broad-based New Jersey education justice campaign - comprising many of the state's leading civil rights, education advocacy, and taxpayer organizations - today released its reactions to Governor Jon Corzine's preliminary plans for a new school funding formula in New Jersey.

"We support quality public education for all of New Jersey's children," said Jerome Harris of the Black Issues Convention, a member of OC/OS. "But we see the Governor's proposal as a step in the wrong direction. It lowers aspirations for all children and stands to deny the resources needed to provide a 'thorough and efficient' education as guaranteed under the New Jersey Constitution."

"It's about time the state provided more resources to low-income children outside of the Abbott school districts, but it would be wrong to do so at the expense of our most disadvantaged students in our urban communities," said Irene Sterling of the Paterson Education Fund. "The Governor's 'money follows the child' proposal is a shell game. It fails to account for the needs of children living in concentrated poverty. Despite what looks like an overall increase in school spending, the school funding proposal could have an especially harsh impact on the children who are most at risk and vulnerable, throughout the state,"

Lindy Wilson of the League of Women Voters of New Jersey, also a member of OC/OS, said "The debate over a new school funding formula must begin with the real cost of quality education for all children."

All member groups in OC/OS agree with Ms. Wilson's statement and are about to publicly release a series of four corrective on the cost of public education in New Jersey. Prepared by experts in school funding from universities and the private sector, and supported by funding from the Prudential Foundation, the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, and the Education Law Center, the four reports spell out costs, best practices, and experience basis for educating children and are expected to provide much-needed information to add to the school funding debate.

One of the studies examines resource allocation in the New Jersey's "lighthouse" suburban school districts. A second examines the spending needed for special programs for at-risk children in New Jersey's Abbott school districts. The third and fourth studies, also due out soon, address costs and policies for quality preschool and special education in New Jersey.

"The Governor, our Legislators, and everyone who cares deeply about how we fund our schools should pay attention to these studies," said Lesley Hirsch of the Education Law Center. "When they do, they will see that New Jersey needs to both aspire to and fund the same quality of education found in the most successful school districts throughout the state. They will also see that additional funding is critical to support instructional and additional programs for at-risk children, especially those residing in our poorest urban centers."

OC/OS will announce its plans to release the at-risk and general education studies in the days ahead as well as its plans for a statewide "***Conversation about the Real Costs of Education***." The campaign also plans to meet with Governor Corzine and members of the New Jersey Legislature to share its findings. For more information about Our Children/Our Schools, the members, and what we stand for, see www.ourchildrenourschools.org.

Press Contacts:

Jerry Harris, NJ Black Issues Convention
Lesley Hirsch, Education Law Center
Irene Sterling, Paterson Ed Fund
Lindy Wilson, League of Women Voters

609.519.6637 or harrisj12@hotmail.com
201.835.3163 or lirsch@edlawcenter.org
973.519.0707 or isterling@paterson-education.org
973.313.1535 or lindy789@optonline.net

* * *