

News

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Education Advocates Call on Legislators to Adopt Millionaire Surcharge Amendment to Boost School Funding

SPRINGFIELD, III. – A coalition of statewide education advocates on Wednesday called on state legislators to support House Joint Resolution Constitutional Amendment 26, a proposal that would require a 3 percent surcharge on income over \$1 million, to direct needed additional funding for K-12 schools. The members released the following statements:

“Every Illinoisan has a stake in ensuring that more investment goes to the classroom, so students get the support they need from their teachers and schools can offer the world-class opportunities that we know can change lives,” said Dan Montgomery, President of the Illinois Federation of Teachers, a statewide union of over 100,000 teachers and public employees. “Rather than ask more from those who can least afford it, it’s time that the wealthiest Illinoisans contribute their fair share to fund education. Although this amendment isn’t the entire solution to the greater revenue crisis in Illinois, it is an important element for improving one of the worst school investment records in the nation. Last November, Illinois voters overwhelmingly approved this proposal and today, we call on all legislators to put the actual policy up for a vote.”

“The state’s Education Funding Advisory Board (EFAB) has determined that the cost of providing every student an adequate education is \$8,899 per pupil, yet the Rauner budget proposes \$5,782 per pupil,” said Cinda Klickna, President of the Illinois Education Association. “It is illogical to believe we can allow revenue sources to disappear and continue to provide a quality education to our students. That’s bad math. Our children are being cheated out of their birthright – the opportunity to receive a high quality education. The Illinois Education Association strongly supports this amendment because it is a step toward ending the inequality that occurs when the support a school receives is determined by a student’s ZIP code.”

“Since 2009, state revenue funds for K-12 education have decreased by nearly \$1 billion,” said Matt Brue, superintendent of Porta Community Unit School District #202 in Petersburg. “We appreciate the priority placed on K-12 education in the recent budget discussions, but are supportive of a comprehensive, long-term fiscal and tax policy plan. A component of this plan should include an additional tax imposed on the highest income earners.”

“We commend this proposal’s focus on increasing investment in education,” said Jessica Handy, Government Affairs Director for Stand for Children Illinois. “Schools have lost hundreds of millions of dollars in the last five years, which hurts the education that our children receive and the professionals in the classroom. Stand for Children supports increased early childhood education opportunities, equitable funding, and support and accountability for all types of public schools – but these strategic investments at their core depend on having adequate funding for our education system.”

“This proposal is an important first step toward restoring the millions that have been cut from K-12 education in recent years,” said Robin Steans, Executive Director of Advance Illinois. “While not a complete solution to our education funding concerns, this proposal can start to move our students and schools toward an adequate base level of funding. Money alone will not improve education or close achievement gaps, however, money matters. Illinois ranks as one of the most regressive states nationwide in how it distributes state funds to schools. We also suffer from some of the nation’s largest achievement gaps between low-income students and their peers. A more equitable funding formula, in tandem with the proposal in HJRCA 26 for increased revenue, would begin to open the doors of opportunity for all Illinois students.”

“Our districts, like others throughout the state, are struggling to maintain a high level of education, while experiencing ongoing proration of General State Aid and multiple-year cuts to their budgets,” said Diane Rutledge, Executive Director of the Large Unit District Association, which represents 55 of the largest school districts in the state. “More than two-thirds of the school districts in Illinois are in deficit spending. Although we do not believe HJRCA 26 is the sole solution to education funding, we do appreciate this effort to identify new revenues for education. This is one piece to the school-funding puzzle. As educators, we will continue to work towards adequate funding and equitable distribution for all of the students in our state in order to complete the puzzle.”

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