

STURLA

from State Representative
MIKE STURLA
96th Legislative District

Report

FEBRUARY 2024
www.RepMikeSturla.com



BASIC EDUCATION FUNDING COMMISSION ADOPTS REPORT

On January 11, the Basic Education Funding Commission (BEFC) adopted a Majority Report by a vote of 8-7 after BEFC Co-Chair Mike Sturla provided an overview of it. At the start of this process in May, his aim was to address adequacy, equity, and timeliness. He believes the Majority Report achieves all three aspects.

When implemented, report recommendations will benefit students and meet the constitutional requirement to adequately and equitably fund education as directed by the Commonwealth Court in February 2023. Recommendations include:

- Calculate and set adequacy targets for each school district similar to those suggested by the plaintiff school districts involved in the lawsuit.
- Establish equity by weighting factors determined by the Independent Fiscal Office.
- Reduce the volatility in the basic education formula to achieve consistency and predictability.
- Establish a seven-year funding implementation plan.
- Ensure accountability for results with measurable outcomes.

To address adequacy gaps, the report recommends an adequacy target methodology that determined that the median spending by successful schools is \$13,704 per weighted student. Using this methodology, the statewide adequacy gap is \$5.4 billion. It also takes into consideration the disparity in local tax effort – and the negative impacts of that disparity which the court noted – by proposing a reduction of \$1 billion in property taxes through a tax equity supplement in districts that, given prior state funding shortfalls, raised taxes on their residents to try to meet the needs of their students. It also recommends an additional \$1.4 billion for all 500 school districts (\$200 million per year for seven years) to cover rising costs.

The report highlighted a variety of impactful issues outside of the basic education formula itself:

- Investing \$2.1 billion (\$300 million for seven years) to fix schools, recognizing the costs of construction and major renovations and school building health and safety improvements that have been ignored due to inadequate state funding for years.
- A continued increase in investment to expand access to high-quality, publicly funded Pre-K and address the early childhood education workforce crisis, plus the potential for universal access to free, full-day kindergarten to all students.



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MORE FROM BEFC REPORT

- Examine charter school funding.
- Invest in our education workforce.
- Invest in student supports, including grade level literacy/literacy support programs and K-12 mental health.
- Also, to consider other important issues, such as pre-kindergarten and universal kindergarten; consolidation and shared services; career and technical education; public libraries; pupil transportation; school safety; special education, and technology.
- Reconstituting the next BEFC in 2029.

Since the BEFC was not able to come to a bipartisan unanimous agreement, Republican members offered their own minority report that was not adopted. Both reports, which do include many agreed upon initiatives, are available at www.BasicEducationFundingCommission.com. The website also includes testimonies and videos of all hearings.

The BEFC's conclusion marks the end of the beginning of this process. Rep. Sturla, and others, will now focus on Gov. Shapiro's inclusion of these recommendations (which his administration helped craft) in the annual state budget in June.

THIS YEAR'S PROPERTY TAX/RENT REBATE PROGRAM EXPANDED

Rep. Sturla co-sponsored HB 1100 to expand the Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program and Gov. Shapiro signed it into law to take effect this year.

Here are the changes:

First, the maximum standard rebate increased from \$650 to \$1,000.

Second, the income cap for both renters and homeowners was made equal and increased to \$45,000 a year:

- The income cap for homeowners increased from \$35,000 to \$45,000
- The income cap for renters increased from \$15,000 to \$45,000

Third, the income caps are tied to the cost-of-living moving forward, meaning those who receive a rebate won't lose their eligibility in the future due to no fault of their own.

Please note these aspects remain the same:

Forms and Schedules: There are no changes to the forms or schedules used for filing a rebate application, meaning prior applicants will use the same process to file their applications that they are accustomed to.

Eligibility Criteria: Applicants of the Property Tax/Rent Rebate Program must fall under one of the four eligibility categories to qualify. These categories ensure the program will continue to benefit eligible Pennsylvanians age 65 and older; widows and widowers age 50 and older; and people with disabilities age 18 and older.

Application Deadline: June 30, 2024 (deadline could be extended if funds available)

Rebates Begin: July 1, 2024, is the first day that rebates can be paid via direct deposit and checks can be mailed to applicants.

For help with your application or to submit it, contact Rep. Sturla's Lancaster Office (1560 Lititz Pike) at Rep.MikeSturla@pahouse.net or 717-295-3157. As always, you can drop your materials off in the black box outside the main entrance.

REP. STURLA'S UPCOMING DISTRICT EVENTS

Register for any event via Rep.MikeSturla@pahouse.net
(include name and home address) or call 717-295-3157.

FEBRUARY 15: SCAM JAM

Held jointly with the PA Department of Banking, the Scam Jam will help protect you from scams and identity theft. It will be held Thursday, February 15 from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. at Calvary Homes, 502 Elizabeth Drive, Lancaster.

MARCH 16: SHREDDING EVENT

The Shredding Event will be on Saturday, March 16 from 12 p.m. to 2 p.m. at the Lancaster Airport (500 Airport Road, Lititz). Any paper can be shredded and staples or paper clips do not need to be removed.

MAY 11: PUBLIC SAFETY FAIR

The Public Safety Fair will be on Saturday, May 11 from 12 p.m. to 3 p.m. at Manheim Township Fire Rescue Station 201, 1399 Fruitville Pike, Lancaster. Safety info will be provided related to traffic, fire, bikes, mental health, fall preventions, and emergency preparedness. Free items will be available while supplies last: mini key-chain flash lights, icepacks, notepads, bike helmets, coloring books, mini-first aid kits, and gun locks. There will be child seat safety checks (registration required), animal demonstrations and signups for the reflective address sign program and free smoke alarm installation. Participating groups include Manheim Township Fire Rescue, PennDOT, PA Fish & Boat Commission, Center for Traffic Safety, PennMedicine LGH, Lancaster Bikes!, Mental Health America, American Red Cross, Lead-Free Families, and Pilot Club of Central PA.

AUGUST 18: BACK TO SCHOOL EVENT

Rep. Sturla is partnering with Rep. Ismail Smith-Wade-El to host his 13th Annual Back to School Event on Sunday, August 18 from 12 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. at Clipper Magazine Stadium (650 N. Prince St., Lancaster). Students again will receive free backpacks, books, school supplies, clothing, shoes, socks, haircuts, food, and a Barnstormers' game. Required registration is available until August 12 at www.RepMikeSturla.com. If your business or organization is interested in helping out this year, please contact Francis Miliano at fmiliano@pahouse.net or 717-295-3157.



SEPTEMBER 19: STATE GRANTS WORKSHOP

Rep. Sturla and Rep. Smith-Wade-El will be co-hosting a workshop for local organizations to learn more about applying for state grants on Thursday, September 19 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the IU 13 Conference Center, 1020 New Holland Ave., Lancaster.

MAY 11 AND AUGUST 18: SMOKEHOUSE TRAILER

At both the Public Safety Fair and Back to School Event, children can participate in a training session in a smokehouse trailer that includes a miniature kitchen, living area, bedroom, and balcony. It features a synthetic smoke generator, a door with a built-in heating element to teach how to sense for fire and heat prior to opening a door, and a collapsible ladder that provides for safe escape from the balcony.

IMPORTANT DATES FOR 2024 ELECTIONS

Below are dates to remember for the elections in 2024:

April 8 – Last day to register to vote before the Primary

April 16 – Last day to apply for mail-in ballots for Primary

April 23 – Primary Election (polls open 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.) and last day counties can receive mail-in ballots

October 21 – Last day to register to vote before the General

October 29 – Last day to apply for mail-in ballots for General

November 5 – General Election (polls open 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.) and last day counties can receive mail-in ballots



To check your voter registration, register to vote, or any other voting information, go to vote.pa.gov.

EXPANDED PA CHILD AND DEPENDENT CARE ENHANCEMENT TAX CREDIT

Rep. Sturla voted to expand the PA Child and Dependent Care Enhancement Tax Credit. This expansion is effective tax year 2023 and can be claimed by April 15, 2024.

For more details and to file online, go to www.pa.gov/childcaretaxcredit.

	Income Under \$43,000		Earning Above \$43,000	
	Prior to Change	Expanded Tax Credit	Prior to Change	Expanded Tax Credit
Max Credit for One Eligible Dependent	\$315	\$1,050	\$180	\$600
Max Credit for Two+ Eligible Dependents	\$630	\$2,100	\$360	\$1,200

\$3.4 MILLION IN FUNDING FOR THE 96TH

Rep. Sturla helped secure \$3.4 million in state grants for these local projects:

- **\$3,132,000** for replacement of water main lines in Lancaster City
- **\$29,830** for Lancaster Symphony Orchestra
- **\$149,715** for equipment upgrades at the Conestoga Water Treatment Plant
- **\$28,080** for Lancaster Science Factory
- **\$95,000** for Fulton Theatre
- **\$17,293** for Music for Everyone
- **\$30,787** for North Museum Corporation

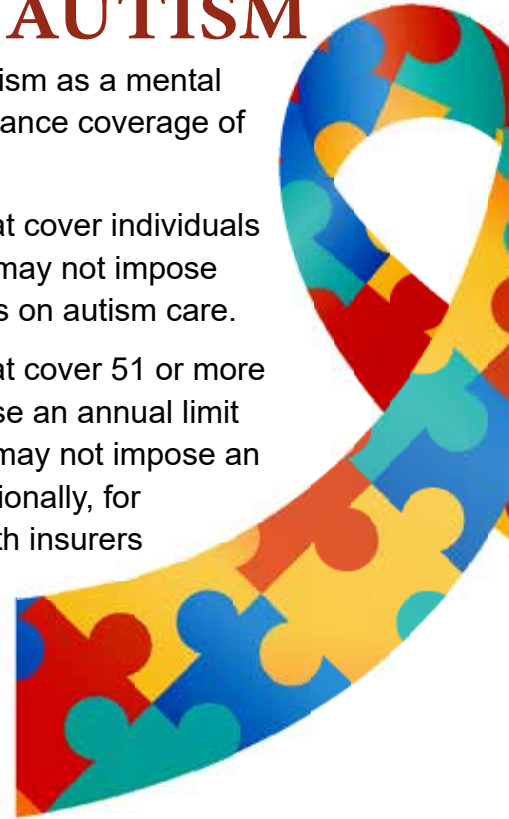
The COVID-19 ARPA PA Arts and Culture Recovery Program was utilized to help our local arts community recover from the pandemic.

STATE DIRECTIVE ABOUT AUTISM

The PA Insurance Department has issued a directive that it is treating autism as a mental health condition, which will have these positive effects on the health insurance coverage of Pennsylvanians living with autism:

- Health insurers may not charge higher copays or deductibles for autism services than for physical health services.
- Health insurers may not cover fewer autism service visits than they would cover for visits for other comparable physical health conditions (i.e. visit limits for autism services must be equal to or greater than visit limits on comparable physical health conditions).
- Health insurance policies that cover individuals and 50 or fewer employees may not impose annual or lifetime dollar limits on autism care.
- Health insurance policies that cover 51 or more employees and do not impose an annual limit for physical health services may not impose an annual limit for autism. Additionally, for insureds under age 21, health insurers must cover at least \$48,786 in autism services.

If your health insurer is not complying with this directive, you can file a complaint at www.insurance.pa.gov/consumers.



LIHEAP AVAILABLE

The state's Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program is still open. Apply at www.compass.state.pa.us or call the LIHEAP hotline at 1-866-857-7095 for more info. Rep. Sturla's office is also available to help.



FAFSA[®]

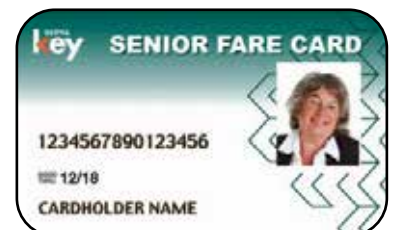
Federal Student Aid
An OFFICE of the U.S. DEPARTMENT of EDUCATION

FAFSA DUE MAY 1

If you need financial aid for higher education in 2024-25, please submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) Form by May 1, 2024. For more information, visit www.studentaid.gov.

APPLY FOR SEPTA SENIOR FARE CARD

Call Rep. Sturla's office at 717-295-3157 to schedule an appointment to complete your SEPTA Senior Fare Card application. Please note that you will NOT receive your card the same day and the anticipated processing time is between six-eight weeks. You also will need to bring your PA ID/driver's license or birth certificate. If renewing, please bring your expired card.





State Representative
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HERE TO SERVE YOU

Rep. Sturla's district office staff is happy to help you navigate state government programs and services. Call the 1560 Lititz Pike office at (717) 295-3157 for free assistance.

Ayuda disponible en español

Tengo la fortuna de tener personal bilingüe listo para ayudarle con cualquier problema relacionado con el estado. Puede llamar nuestra oficina, localizada en 1560 Lititz Pike, Lancaster, al (717) 295-3157.

MY OFFICE CAN HELP YOU WITH:

- Property Tax/Rent Rebate problems or questions
- PACE prescription-drug cards for senior citizens
- Car registrations, special tags, disability parking placards, titles, and driver's license applications
- Information on financial assistance for higher education
- Voter registration and absentee ballot applications
- Unemployment compensation, disability and workers' compensation
- Requests for literature – bills, regulations, statutes, Pennsylvania maps, senior citizen information
- Citations from the Pennsylvania House of Representatives for outstanding accomplishments and family milestones
- Renewal of state-issued licenses or certifications
- Liquor Control Board concerns or questions
- Tours of the state Capitol for individuals or groups

Sign Up for Weekly Emails

If you would like to receive weekly email updates on state government issues, go to www.RepMikeSturla.com and scroll to the bottom of the page for the sign up form. For timely updates, you can follow [@RepMikeSturla](https://twitter.com/RepMikeSturla) on X, Facebook and Instagram.

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