

**STATEMENT OF DAVID G. SCIARRA, ELC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ON GOVERNOR CHRIS
CHRISTIE'S SCHOOL FUNDING PLAN**

June 21, 2016

The Governor's school funding plan announced today is not only the opposite of fairness, it would spell the end of our State's commitment to an education that will prepare all New Jersey children to be good citizens and productive participants in our economy.

This irresponsible plan is a complete non-starter for many reasons. First, the NJ Legislature, on a bipartisan basis, has stood firmly by the school aid formula, our state's model funding mechanism that is weighted to provide resources based on student need. The Governor neglected to mention that it is his failure to fund the school aid formula adopted in 2008 that has led to dire circumstances in so many of our school districts.

Second, the Governor's proposal is completely contrary to the long held consensus in NJ that funding should be based on the unique needs of students. This principle has guided every funding formula in NJ since 1970, and is the basis on which the current funding formula rests.

Third, if this plan were implemented it would devastate our schools by removing an unprecedented level of educational resources – teachers, guidance counselors, librarians, support programs and services, and more – from districts all across the state. It will target communities that educate at-risk children, including poor children, children who are learning English, and children with disabilities. Our communities of color are especially vulnerable, and students in school districts in rural, suburban and urban areas will all suffer.

Finally, without question this proposal is unconstitutional under the basic principles that govern the state's obligation to provide a thorough and efficient education for all children under the NJ Constitution. As recently as 2009, our Supreme Court has made clear that the State is legally required to provide funding to children across the state at a level that allows each district to deliver a constitutional education. This plan is completely contrary to these core principals and the values that all New Jerseyans share.

Instead of spending his time on a hopeless campaign to pit schoolchildren, families and communities against each other, the Governor should work with the Legislature to provide the resources all New Jersey children need and deserve.

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