

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Nashville Public Education Foundation Says Tennessee Investments in Schools is Grossly Inadequate; Calls on Community to Advocate for Increased Funding

NPEF Pushing for Adoption of 2020 BEP Review Committee Priority Recommendations and Long-term Overhaul of Education Funding Formula

NASHVILLE, TENN. – March 15, 2021 – In an effort to raise awareness of challenges in education and push for data-driven solutions, the [Nashville Public Education Foundation \(NPEF\)](#) has released an informational Policy Brief outlining the complexities, challenges, inadequacies, and consequences of Tennessee’s Basic Education Program (BEP) funding formula for schools. Titled “[Funding Our Schools: How Tennessee’s Funding Formula Fails to Meet the Needs of Nashville’s Students](#),” the brief encourages Tennessee to fully adopt the recommendations of its own BEP Review Committee and calls on the community to advocate for increased funding for the state’s schools.

“The state’s funding formula affects every neighborhood and public school student in the state, yet it’s complexity makes it difficult for families and neighbors to understand or talk about. We want to help shed light on why the formula fails to meet the needs of our students and amplify this critical conversation,” said **Katie Cour, President and CEO of the Nashville Public Education Foundation**. “Bottom line, the BEP consistently underestimates what it takes to run schools and places an unattainable burden on local districts to pick up the difference. Too often people feel relieved when they hear the state has ‘fully funded the BEP,’ but this statement is essentially meaningless. Tennessee is grossly underfunding schools that serve one million students each year – more than 82,000 just in Nashville.”

Tennessee is currently ranks 43rd in the nation on per-pupil funding levels according to the [Education Law Center](#). The BEP formula dictates a per-student budget amount in Tennessee that is approximately \$3,655 less than the nationwide average. In addition, while the nationwide split of local and state funding is often close to equal, Tennessee’s deficient formula means that Metro Nashville Public Schools (MNPS) receives only approximately 26% of its revenue from the state, with the balance coming from local tax dollars in Davidson County.

In addition to insufficient funding, a primary challenge of the formula is its consistent underestimation of the budget requirements of running a school system, regardless of its size. NPEF’s Policy Brief breaks down key controversial and confusing components of the formula, such as why approximately 7,000 more teachers are hired statewide each year than are actually accounted for in the BEP, and why this is a

failure on the part of the formula. These differences in what the state formula generates and what local districts actually need to spend must be made up by local funds, which is incredibly challenging for even the wealthiest counties.

Each year, a BEP Review Committee examines the formula and its results and makes recommendations to improve how it funds our schools. Last year, the committee proposed an array of improvements that would help to bring some key objectives closer in line with national best practices. Approving and funding those recommendations is essential in the short-term, but ultimately NPEF advocates for a complete overhaul of the formula.

Additional fundamental miscalculations of the BEP are outlined in the Policy Brief, allowing for robust discussion around changes that can improve outcomes for students across the state. NPEF believes a better-funded and more strategic BEP will transform Tennessee’s public education system.

“Understanding the BEP and seeking its necessary reformulation is something that should be on every Nashvillian’s mind,” said **Cour.** “We have data that reflects proven paths to success. Investment in education is an investment in the future of our state, and it’s time our investment matches our priorities for students.”

NPEF regularly convenes stakeholders to advocate for data-driven solutions and change. In addition to education funding, NPEF programs and coalitions address topics such as college access and success, the importance of effective principals and leaders, teacher recruitment and retention, and the conditions that must be present in schools for children to thrive.

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About the Nashville Public Education Foundation

The Nashville Public Education Foundation is a nonprofit organization that raises private funds to support teachers and leaders, champion successes, and dismantle inequities in Metro Nashville Public Schools. More information is available at nashvillepef.org.

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