Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 23, 2015

Governor Thomas W. Wolf
Room 225
Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17120

Dear Governor Wolf:

We write to respectfully request that your administration act immediately to release federal education funds – already appropriated by Congress and dispersed to Pennsylvania – to elementary and secondary schools throughout the Commonwealth. While we acknowledge the state's right to negotiate a budget that both the state legislature and the governor's office can agree upon, holding federal education funding hostage during this state budget impasse is unacceptable.

According to a news report in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, you have met with representatives of at least one school district which requested an advance on its funding from the state coffers. The newspaper reports that you denied the request, indicating that you would refuse dispersal of funds – even to distressed school districts – until the budget impasse has been solved. We admit that we are perplexed by the cavalier attitude with which you have dismissed the concerns of schools; administrators and faculty; and students and parents.

As you know, the lack of funds has forced schools to take extraordinary measures to keep their doors open. Teachers have gone without pay. Vendors have provided products and services on credit. Schools themselves have taken out private loans. The continued failure to fund Pennsylvania schools could result in school closures as early as November 1, 2015.

We are specifically concerned about Title I, II, and III funding, as well as federal grants provided through the 21st Century Learning Centers Program, which provides critical afterschool programs for at-risk children in our communities. While this money is being held in limbo during your ongoing budget disagreement, school districts in more rural and urban settings are being affected the most. Unfortunately, the school children who need the most support are the ones who will be hit the hardest. Please do not allow partisan conflict to interfere with federal funding that should already be flowing.

We find it alarming that steps have been taken to ensure that certain political employees will continue to be paid while our public schools teeter on the edge of insolvency. News reports indicate that the Pennsylvania House Democratic Caucus recently received a $1.9 million interest-free advance from the State Treasury to pay staff during the stalemate. Meanwhile, you have inexplicably blocked a similar request from the Erie school district for similar consideration. Schools seeking actual loans are paying four to five percent interest just to keep their doors open, while the House Democratic Caucus continues to run smoothly without

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interruption or additional cost. This is intolerable and should be embarrassing to all parties involved.

As you surely are aware, Pennsylvania and Illinois are the only two states currently operating without budgets in place. We have no doubt that you also know that the Pennsylvania Constitution holds that it is the state's duty to provide and maintain a "thorough and efficient system of public education." The current condition of our education system falls far short of this mandate.

We fully understand that the demands on your attention, and that of your staff, are great while the negotiations continue. We simply ask that you make the release of the duly appropriated federal education dollars your top priority at this time.

Sincerely,

Lou Barletta
Member of Congress

Mike Kelly
Member of Congress

Glenn "GT" Thompson
Member of Congress

Bill Shuster
Member of Congress

Keith Rothfus
Member of Congress

Tim Murphy
Member of Congress

Tom Marino
Member of Congress

Scott Perry
Member of Congress