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PA EDUCATION ADVOCATES AND ASSOCIATIONS OPPOSE BILL THAT REDIRECTS PUBLIC SCHOOL FUNDING TO TUITION VOUCHER PROGRAMS WHEN DISTRICTS ACT TO PROTECT STUDENTS FROM COVID-19

HARRISBURG, PA (Sept. 24, 2021) – A diverse coalition of public education advocates and Pennsylvania education associations representing hundreds of thousands of school administrators, employees, and elected school board members called on the state House of Representatives to oppose a bill that could put students at risk when schools experience COVID-19 outbreaks.

House Bill 1254 would require any school district that “denies a resident student full-time, in-person instruction” to establish a tuition voucher program for those students. As the bill is currently worded, these tuition voucher programs would be triggered even when school districts follow public health directives by temporarily shifting to remote instruction to prevent the rapid spread of COVID-19 in a school building.

The advocacy and education groups sent a letter today to Pennsylvania House leaders urging them to oppose this bill.

“This misguided legislation would force school districts to create tuition voucher programs if they close a school building — even for a day,” the letter states. “The bill would, quite literally, cost school districts millions of dollars just because they follow medical and scientific health guidance to protect students, school staff, and their families from COVID-19.

“Forcing school officials to choose between keeping their students and staff members safe from a virus that has cost nearly 700,000 Americans their lives or losing millions in state funding to

tuition voucher programs is terrible public health policy. It also undercuts our mission to safely educate Pennsylvania's 1.7 million public school students.”

Read the full letter below.

FINAL TEXT OF LETTER

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