



PHILADELPHIA

FEDERATION of TEACHERS

Education Equity Event w/ Senator Vincent Hughes

Jerry Jordan

Martin Luther King, Jr. High School | Monday, April 5, 2021 | 4:30PM

Good afternoon, I'm Jerry Jordan, President of the Philadelphia Federation of teachers. Thank you to my friend--and my Senator--Senator Hughes for convening this important event. Today's gathering is powerful, and reminds me of one of my favorite quotes from Fannie Lou Hamer: **I'm sick and tired of being sick and tired.**

All of us up here today: we're sick and tired of being sick and tired.

- We're sick and tired of having to fight for education funding that is actually a basic human right.
- We're sick and tired of cries of 'there's no money.'
- We're sick and tired of begging for the bare minimum for our young people.
- We're sick and tired of schools riddled with lead, asbestos, and mold.
- We're sick and tired of people getting ill or worse from conditions in our school buildings.
- We're sick and tired of budgets that leave our children shortchanged time and again.

Our young people, the majority of whom are Black and brown and experiencing poverty, have had to endure conditions that would never, *ever* be tolerated in wealthier, whiter school districts.

We're sick and tired of budgets that don't put the most vulnerable among us first. Budgets that somehow--somehow--make education funding seem like a "nice to have."

Our kids deserve a fair shot. And while I'm sick and tired, and while all of us up here are sick and tired, I can't help but feel a slight bit of hope today, because what is before us is an opportunity. An opportunity to do right by our kids. There's a bold proposal in front of the state legislature--bold only inasmuch as it may not be easy to pass. But what is before the legislature is a proposal that is about basic educational equity.

There's a really good and equitable formula for distributing education funding--many of us here fought long and hard to ensure that the previous governor who eliminated it was the first one term governor in PA's recent history. We then worked tirelessly to ensure that Governor Wolf reimplemented an equitable formula. And we've pushed to ensure that Governor Wolf has taken the next necessary step to ensure that not only does the funding formula exist, but that ALL money goes through the formula.

So the question before the state legislature is simple: do our kids deserve a fair shot?

As we stand out here today in front of Martin Luther King Jr High School, a day after the anniversary of his assassination, we should all feel the collective urgency of fighting every single day to achieve the vision for our society that he laid out, a vision that he was murdered fighting for. For far too many, this vision is far from realized. And I'm sick and tired of it. With everything we've got, the PFT is deeply committed to continuing the fight for justice.