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## OPEN LETTER ON STATE BUDGET IMPASSE

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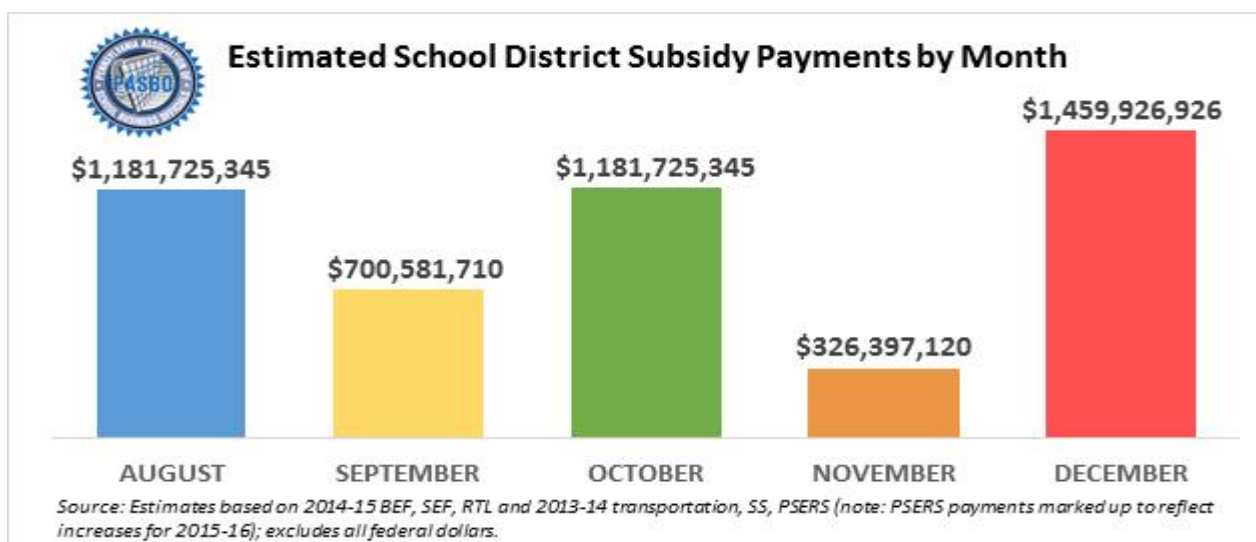
Dear Governor Wolf and members of the General Assembly:

A crisis is building in communities throughout our state as each day passes without a budget. Like flood waters rising, an increasing number of districts are making plans to take on more debt to make payroll and pay bills as they prepare to educate more than 1.8 million children returning to their local public schools.

As you are aware, school districts have not received any funding from the state for the 2015-2016 fiscal year. The number of school districts negatively impacted surged at the end of August when more than \$1 billion in state education funding normally paid to schools was missing. By October, school districts will be operating with a short-fall of more than \$3 billion in state funding.

In one of only three states without the predictability of a basic education funding formula, Pennsylvania school leaders have used their best annual guesses regarding state dollars when building their budgets. This year, it's anyone's guess when the state will fund its schools, how much state support each community's schools will receive, and how the funding will be allocated.

We applauded the work of the [Basic Education Funding Commission](#) for addressing educational equity by making recommendations for a new basic education funding formula and Governor Wolf for proposing a \$400 million increase to address adequate funding in his state budget proposal. As was highlighted in a [special report](#) from the Pennsylvania School Boards Association, these were major steps in the right direction to strengthen education for students statewide.



However, as each day has passed without state funding, an increasing number of schools across the state have begun to feel their finances squeezed. The current state budget impasse has exacerbated already difficult financial situations in schools across the state.

This spring, the Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators (PASA) and the Pennsylvania Association of School Business Officials (PASBO) [reported](#) that schools in every corner of the Commonwealth and districts of every type were cutting programs and teaching positions to balance their budgets. The common thread in the PASA-PASBO survey results was that local superintendents, business managers, school boards, and taxpayers worked creatively and collaboratively to serve their students. They also have been looking to Harrisburg to deliver desperately-needed resources after five years of historic reductions in educational programs.

Forty-one percent of districts that responded to the PASA-PASBO survey said they planned to cut more staff prior to the start of the new school year. Seventy one percent said they planned to raise property taxes this year. Eighty percent were taxing at or above their Act 1 limit, a cap that the state created to keep property taxes in check.

For more than two decades Pennsylvania schools have been without fair, predictable, sustainable or sufficient funding from the state, resulting in the most unfair and inequitable system of school funding in the nation. Now is the time for state policymakers to substantially increase the state's investment in education and compromise by allocating portions of the 2015-16 funding to both restore previous cuts and institute the new formula recommended by the Basic Education Funding Commission.

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