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Leandro Ruling Upholds Right to a Sound Basic Education for Every Child in NC

Public School Forum of North Carolina & Dudley Flood Center for Educational Equity and Opportunity Statement on Supreme Court Ruling

(Raleigh, NC) November 4, 2022 — Today is a seminal day for all of us in North Carolina. The North Carolina Supreme Court affirmed the constitutional right of each and every child in our state to the opportunity to receive a sound basic education through their ruling in the [Leandro Case](#).

As we think about the importance of this day, we keep our children, rather than politics, at the center. Our children are the very people who will shape our world, our economy, and our communities in the decades to come. They will inherit what we create. This historic decision recognizes the foundational importance of public education and prioritizes our students, our schools, and our state's future.

Our State Constitution guarantees children in North Carolina the fundamental right to a sound basic education. Over the last three decades, the Leandro case and prior Supreme Court rulings have confirmed that children in our state have been denied this constitutional right.

The Leandro Comprehensive Remedial Plan, agreed upon by the defendants and plaintiffs, provides a detailed, evidence-based roadmap for the investments needed for kids and educators across North Carolina. It is based upon what the research tells us is needed for students to receive a sound basic education:

- A well-prepared, high quality, diverse teacher workforce;
- A well-prepared, high quality principal workforce;
- Adequate, equitable, and predictable school funding;
- A reliable assessment and accountability system;
- Support for low-performing schools;
- High-quality, affordable, and accessible early childhood opportunities;
- Opportunity to engage in high-quality postsecondary and career pathways.

Specific and much-needed investments called for in the Comprehensive Remedial Plan will increase state support for items such as programs to improve teacher recruitment and retention,



compensation, and professional learning; school-based mental health supports, and targeted funding for students with the greatest need.

Today's 4-3 Supreme Court Ruling upholds our State Constitution and the rights of our children, families, and communities. The majority opinion states: "This Court has long recognized that our Constitution empowers the judicial branch with inherent authority to address constitutional violations through equitable remedies. For twenty-five years, the judiciary has deferred to the executive and legislative branches to implement a comprehensive solution to this ongoing constitutional violation. Today, that deference expires. If this Court is to fulfill its own constitutional obligations, it can no longer patiently wait for the day, year, or decade when the State gets around to acting on its constitutional duty 'to guard and maintain' the constitutional rights of North Carolina schoolchildren."

This is a first step to eradicating inequities between affluent and economically disadvantaged schools and districts. This ruling helps to provide a pathway to systematic approaches to meet the needs of each and every student. We must all continue to support equitable practices that provide adequate resources to the approximate 1.5 million public school students and the districts serving them each day.

This is an important step forward, but the work does not stop here. Our schools need these investments, and the *Leandro* ruling is a critical step to ensuring that schools and districts have the resources needed to implement the Comprehensive Remedial Plan. We look forward to working with our state, district, and school leaders and the many people who support our students each day to ensure that these investments lead to the critical access to opportunities and outcomes for students across NC.