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## 2020 Legislative Questionnaire

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### CANDIDATE CERTIFICATION

Candidate Name: Larry Farnese

Office Sought: **State Legislator**

I have read the attached questionnaire responses and certify that the information provided is accurate and the opinions stated accurately reflect my own positions.

Candidate Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: **2-15-2020**

Please complete, sign and return this form via email in Word format to [info@phillynn.org](mailto:info@phillynn.org) and mail or fax a copy of the signature page to:

Gloria Gilman  
121 S Broad St, Suite 1720  
Philadelphia, PA 19107  
215-568-4990  
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**BACKGROUND— PLEASE ATTACH A COPY OF YOUR CURRICULUM VITAE AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING:**

1. What, if any, elected or appointed government office(s) have you held, including the one you're seeking?

I have served as State Senator for the 1st District since 2008.

2. If you have previously held a government office:

a. What are the primary issue areas in which you were involved?

I sponsored a single-payer healthcare bill in 2009, my first year in office and I also voted to expand Medicaid in Pennsylvania to over half a million Pennsylvanians - the single biggest expansion of healthcare in Pennsylvania history.

I am the prime sponsor of SB 614 - making it illegal to discriminate against someone based on their sexual orientation or gender identity in housing and employment, SB 96 and SB 947 - which strengthen Pennsylvania's hate crimes statutes to provide protection to LGBTQ community members and stiffer punishments for those that harm someone based on who they love, and SB 212 - which prohibits the use of gay and trans panic defense in homicide cases.

I am the lead author of a budget sign-on letter that will be signed by members of the SEPA Delegation urging Wolf to immediately provide \$170 million in funding for toxic schools, include a Healthy Schools Initiative which would fund enviro issues in the PA Budget, and to implement the Fair Funding Formula to provide Philadelphia with \$400 million in additional funding.

I stood up to the gas companies in 2011 and voted against a sweetheart deal that would have subsidized their destruction of our environment and I stood up against them earlier this month and again voted no. I also co-sponsored Pennsylvania's version of the Green New Deal to move Pennsylvania energy production to 100% renewable energy by 2050. And I supported legislation that would require 30% of all energy produced in PA to come from renewable sources by 2030.

b. What committees, caucuses or working groups have you served on?

I am a proud member of the Democratic Senate leadership.

I am the Democratic Chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee.

I am a member of the Equality and Women's Health Caucuses.

I am a member of the Governor's Commission on LGBTQ Affairs.

3. What community or policy issues have you worked on, and in what capacity, outside of government? (Please provide the names of two or three individuals who can provide information about your previous work.)

Before taking office, I volunteered as a patient escort at the women's center, helping women seeking access to health services safely enter Planned Parenthood facilities. I also am a proud "big" in the Big Brothers Big Sisters Program.

4. Please provide copies of all your significant campaign materials, including position papers, and information on your campaign strategy, expected funding sources, and endorsements.

My campaign website, <https://www.farneseforpa.com>, hosts my bio and platform information. I won election in this district three times, and I intend to do the same things I've done in the past: knock on doors, attend community events, and raise the funds necessary to communicate directly with voters that I am unable to reach in person.

I am proud to have the early endorsement of SEIU State Council, as well as many of colleagues, like Senator Muth, Senator Lindsey, Senator Kearney, Senator Haywood, Representative Sims, and Representative Isaacson. Most organizations are still reviewing 2020 candidates, but I expect to build a strong coalition of support as I have throughout my career.

5. What is your plan to win this race.

My plan to win this race is to reach out to the voters and talk with them about local issues, and update them on what I have been doing and will continue to do to improve our communities. My plan to reach out to voters has three parts: continue to attend events and community meetings throughout the district, talk to voters at their doors, and develop an effective paid communication plan that can help demonstrate the ways I have been fighting for the 1st District in Harrisburg.

## ISSUES

**Please note: Although many of the following questions may be answered "yes" or "no" you should feel free to elaborate if doing so would provide a clearer statement of your position. If you believe you do not have enough information to answer a question, or have not formed an opinion, please say so.**

### I. OVERALL

What would be your three highest priorities as a legislator? Explain.

- Pass a bill to fund asbestos, lead, mold abatement and repairs at toxic schools in Philadelphia and statewide.
- Pass a statewide non-discrimination legislation for housing and employment to protect members of the LGBTQIA community.
- Raise the minimum wage to 15 hour.

### II. Education

- 1) Do you believe public college, or community college, should be tuition free?

Yes, I support free college tuition at community colleges or public colleges. I cosponsored several bills to provide free college tuition or substantially reduced tuition to students and working Pennsylvania families. I also cosponsored Senate Bill 400 - the Pennsylvania Student Higher Education Lending Protection (HELP) Act. The

legislation seeks to help the 1.8 million Pennsylvania residents that carry an average of \$36,000 in student loan debt. The legislation helps students reduce their debt by:

- Issuing bonds to refinance \$1 billion in student debt into more affordable interest rates
- Allowing students to apply for a \$500 tax credit against the PA Income Tax
- Encouraging employers to help employees who have outstanding higher education loans by exempting from state and local taxes payments that employers make to an employee's 529 savings account, making payments to an employees outstanding student loan debt, or applying a cash equivalent to unused carryover paid time off to an employee's outstanding student loans.

I have also cosponsored legislation to create a Pay It Forward Pay It Back (PFPB) program. The PFPB program creates a public fund from which students can borrow money to help fund their higher education. After students graduate and join the workforce, participants would pay back the amount borrowed interest free through a small deduction from their paychecks (4% deduction). The loan repayments would eventually create a self sustaining higher education fund. I have also co-sponsored a bill to provide free in state tuition to DREAMERS.

I also support Governor Wolf's budget proposal to provide \$204 million in tuition assistance to students who attend state system of higher education schools. The assistance would supplement federal pell grants and phea grants to provide tuition-free education to thousands of students. The proposal requires students to live in Pennsylvania for each year they receive tuition assistance. If a student received four years of assistance and they leave Pennsylvania two years after graduating, they would be required to pay back two years of assistance.

- 2) What role do you believe standardized tests should play in evaluating teachers, schools and students if any?

Standardized tests should not be the sole evaluation method for teacher, student, and school success. There are many factors and issues that influence the success of students and schools. Working with my colleague Senator Dinniman and the Senate Democrats we fought against the misguided and punitive Keystone Exams. We need to look at many other factors including student graduation rates, student GPA, students attending higher education including two-year and four-year, trade schools, and joining the military. We also need to factor in what students join the workforce after high school and factor that into student success.

- 3) What factors do you believe should be considered in determining *overall levels* of school funding in the Commonwealth, and funding *per school district*?

I support the full implementation of the bi-partisan basic education funding formula. This would provide Philadelphia schools with an additional \$400 million per year.

- 4) Approximately 33% of Philadelphia students are enrolled in charter schools. What is your position on the expansion of charter schools? Should they be given public money via vouchers or similar programs (like ESAs)? What role do you think public schools play in our city?

We need to ensure that charter schools and cyber charter schools are properly educating students and are not draining precious resources from public schools. I oppose vouchers and similar programs to give public money to students to attend charter or private schools.

There are great public schools in Senate District 1 and throughout Philadelphia. We should do everything we can to support these schools and to provide them with fair funding. That is why the immediate or a four-year phase-in of the Basic Education Fair Funding Formula is so important.

### III. Budget and Taxes

- 1) Do you support a Constitutional Amendment to permit progressive taxation in PA, in whole or part?

Yes. I fought for fair tax structures including closing the Delaware Loophole for corporations. I support implementing a graduated income tax structure so that those who earn more pay their fair share. Millionaires should pay more in taxes than blue collar, middle-class families who are struggling to pay their mortgage and send their kids to college.

- 2) Would you support raising the tax on unearned income as a way to increase state revenue without increasing burdens on working people?

Yes

- 3) What changes if any would you support in corporate net income tax levels?

Governor Wolf and Senate Democrats have supported several revisions to the corporate net income tax. It needs to be discussed in conjunction with other corporate tax reforms like eliminating the Delaware Loophole and combined reporting.

- 4) What changes, if any, would you support in the personal income tax?

I support a graduated income tax.

- 5) Do you support full elimination of the Delaware loophole?

Yes, I have been a longtime supporter and cosponsor of legislation to eliminate the Delaware Loophole.

- 6) Do you support a tax on fracking, and at what level?

Yes, I support a natural gas severance tax. I am currently a cosponsor of the Governor's Restore PA Plan. In public opinion polls, 70% of respondents support a natural gas severance tax. I support a Natural Gas Severance Tax that is in line with severance taxes in other states and provides billions of dollars to support critical infrastructure repairs in Philadelphia.

- 7) Do you support the Keystone Opportunity Zone program? Would you introduce legislation to eliminate it, or to limit the number of times a parcel's KOZ designation can be renewed or extended? More generally, do you support tax breaks to lure or retain businesses?

I support targeted tax breaks that lead to brownfield redevelopment and the Keystone Opportunity Zone program to provide targeted tax breaks that help to restore parcels in neighborhoods that have been long neglected. Tax breaks can be a good tool to encourage investment and job creation in low income neighborhoods and places with high unemployment.

At the same time, we cannot and should not provide tax breaks to wealthy billion dollar companies, which is why I opposed HB 1100 recently. This bill would have provided \$455 million in tax breaks to petrochemical companies to build natural gas cracker plants or fertilizer plants in Northeastern PA.

#### **IV. Public Banking**

Would you support the creation of a Pennsylvania Public Bank, modeled after [the Bank of North Dakota](#)?

I do not believe that we need a public bank. Pennsylvania has a robust financial industry including many banks and credit unions. They compete against each other and offer good services to Pennsylvanians.

#### **V. Women's Rights**

1) Do you believe there should be any restrictions on a woman's right to choose? If so, what?

No. I have been a lifelong advocate for a woman's right to control her reproductive health.

2) What additional protections should be enacted into law to protect women's health care?

In our Republican-dominated legislature, we need to think in terms of defense. Women's health care is under constant attack in Harrisburg - and I have fought against every single effort to limit a woman's right to choose. Since I was sworn into my first term, in 2009, there have been approximately 17 votes in the Senate to limit a woman's right to choose, to undermine the US Supreme Court's decision to constitutionally protect safe and legal abortions, and to interfere with the doctor-patient relationship. One of the ways I've fought our Republican-dominated legislature is by sponsoring the escort protection bill requiring certain amount of feet bw protester and patient at a clinic.

I believe that we should pass a law to repeal Act 122 of 2011. This bill sets up unnecessary burdens and mandates that abortion facilities must meet under the ambulatory surgical procedures act. This thinly veiled attack on women's health was launched under the guise of protecting women from the horrors of Dr. Kermit Gosnell. Instead of helping women, this bill placed unnecessary burdens on abortion providers, led to the closures of five abortion clinics and limited access to women's health.

I led the charge to help flip six state senate seats from Republicans to Democrats in the last two years. Once we get a Democratic majority in one or both chambers, we should work to enshrine the US Supreme Court's Roe vs. Wade decision into the PA Constitution by passing a bill and putting a questions before voters to give women the right to make their own health care decisions and the right to have an abortion.

3) Would you support proposals to ensure that women and men working in the Commonwealth receive equal pay for equal work?

Yes, I have cosponsored Senate Bill 721. Senate Bill 721 tackles the unconscionable fact that women make on average 79 cents for every dollar paid to men accounting to a wage gap of over \$10,000 year. To combat unequal pay in the workplace, the legislation I cosponsored makes several important updates to Pennsylvania's Equal Pay Law:

1. Broadens the scope of current law to include more employees and fringe benefits.
2. Protects employees from retaliations when inquiring about wage information ensuring wages are based on bona fide factors; and
3. Provide workers the ability to collect unpaid wages when an employer is found to violate the law.

4) Do you support legislation to protect individuals against sexual assault?

Yes. I have been a leader in fighting to change the culture of sexual harassment in the Capitol. We need to believe victims. The days of victim shaming are over. Victims deserve to be heard, believed, and their claims must be investigated.

I was one of the first Democratic Senators to call on Senator Daylin Leach to resign after an interim and final investigation report found Leach engaged in inappropriate conduct and conversations with women including state senate and campaign staffers.

In order to change the culture in the State Capitol, Senator Farnese has cosponsored two bills, Senate Bills 480 and 809 to provide a much more open and transparent process for the reporting and investigation of sexual harassment. Senate Bill 809 creates a legislative conduct oversight board to receive and independently investigate allegations of harassment against elected officials and staff. Senate 480 prohibits the use of non-disclosure agreements for sexual harassment settlements, forbids the use of taxpayer dollars to pay settlements, and provides counseling for victims.

## **VI. Children and Families**

1) Should the state require businesses to provide paid family leave?

Yes. I cosponsored legislation to require the utilization of paid family leave, and I led the fight in the senate to stop preemption of Philadelphia 's paris sick leave bill.

2) Should the state provide universal availability of affordable child care? If yes, how would you achieve this?

Yes. We need to devote more funding to quality subsidized child care through Pennsylvania's Keystone Stars program. Keystone Stars is a leader in providing quality child care to Pennsylvania's working families.

## **VII. Environment**

1) What measures, if any, would you support to move PA off its reliance on fossil fuels and expand use of renewable energy sources?

I support Governor Wolf's proposal to have Pennsylvania join the multi-state regional carbon cap and trade program called the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI). Republicans and their special interest supporters in the fossil fuel industry are going to fight this proposal and we have to fight back. This is a way for us to join our neighboring states in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic to address Climate Change in PA.

I stood up to the gas companies in 2012 by voting against the sweetheart Act 13 that provided a slew of regulatory and environmental changes that made it easier for gas companies to frack and provided other industry friendly regulatory and environmental changes. That is why I stood up against them earlier this month and again voted no

on HB 1100 that would have provided \$450 million in tax breaks to companies that built natural gas cracker plants or fertilizer plants. I even sent a letter to the Bankruptcy Court Judge to urge that the PES site be sold to a bidder that intends to reuse the site consistent with the City of Philadelphia's goal to transition all of their energy production to renewable energy by 2050 while looking to provide safe, prevailing wage union jobs for not just the next 10 years, but for the next 50 or 100.

I co-sponsored Pennsylvania's version of the Green New Deal - Senate Bill 630 - to move Pennsylvania energy production to 100% renewable energy by 2050. This is the major goal of the Green New Deal. There is a great local solar company in Senate District 1 called Solar States. They are headquartered on American Street in Kensington. They are part of the renewable energy revolution that will meet the needs of Philadelphia and its citizens for generations to come. They would be a great company to put solar panels on the former PES site.

I also co-sponsored Senate Bill 600 that would require 30% of all energy produced in PA to come from renewable sources by 2030. Generating more of Pennsylvania's energy is just one step in the process of creating a better future for Pennsylvanians. Another step we need to take is to renew our communities through strategic investments in affordable housing. I secured a \$200,000 PHARE housing grant for Fitzwater Homes. This funding will ensure that Trinity Baptist Church Enterprises can renovate 22 units of affordable housing to help low income residents maintain their homes in the gentrified and high income Graduate Hospital neighborhood. The renovations will make the homes more energy efficient.

Since 2009, Senator Farnese has secured over \$14 million in affordable housing grants and tax credits for projects in SD 1. So far, these grants and tax credits have created over 1,000 units of affordable housing and will create hundreds of more units of affordable housing over the next several years that will use energy efficiency and smart building techniques.

## 2) Do you support a ban on fracking in whole or part?

The natural gas and oil companies are too powerful and have too many rights in PA. With fracking-friendly Republican majorities in the state legislature, the votes haven't been there yet for a full or partial fracking ban. Until we reach that point, my focus has been on holding these companies accountable and winning victories for our environment and public health. That being said, due to the recent federal investigation I would support a ban for now at least, so that the issue of permitting and the integrity of that process can be evaluated.

I voted to protect consumers and landowners by voting against natural gas industry deregulation and the repeal of consumer protections in the fall of 2019 when I opposed SB 790. In 2012, I also voted against the sweetheart package of legislation for the natural gas industry known as Act 13 that trampled on landowner and municipal rights and provided a slew of regulatory and environmental changes that made it easier for gas companies to frack.

The fracking debate could also be rendered moot by passing legislation I co-sponsored to implement Pennsylvania's version of the Green New Deal - Senate Bill 630 to move Pennsylvania energy production to 100% renewable energy by 2050. This is the major goal of the Green New Deal.

I'm working hard across PA to help Democrats win a majority. I'll keep fighting against the abuses and excesses of the fracking industry until that time, and I expect to be an important part of the anti-fracking debate when we gain a majority.

3) Do you think Philadelphia should be compelled or induced to sell PGW?

No. Philadelphia should be allowed to make a decision on the future of PGW that is most beneficial to its residents.

4) The Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce advocates converting Philadelphia into an “energy hub” for oil and natural gas, or the “Houston of the East Coast.” Do you agree or disagree with this vision?

I disagree. I would like Philadelphia to become a renewable energy hub.

What, if any, other measures would you support to preserve or improve our environment? (water issues, park preservation, detoxification of school buildings, etc.)

One of my top priorities is to pass a bill to fund asbestos, lead, mold abatement and repairs at toxic schools in Philadelphia and throughout the commonwealth. I also am fully committed to passing PA’s Green New Deal.

## **VIII. Criminal Justice**

1) Should stop and frisk be limited or outlawed?

Outlawed.

2) How would you deal with the problem of mass incarceration of minorities, particularly minority youth?

I voted for substantial criminal justice reforms including the use of alternative sentencing and enhanced treatment options for non-violent offenders. These reforms have helped to reduce the state prison population.

I also cosponsored legislation to decriminalize marijuana and to legalize recreational marijuana.

I cosponsored a piece of legislation supported by Lt. Governor John Fetterman with Republican Senator Camera Bartolotta to reform the PA Pardons Board to reduce the influence of politics on pardons decisions by reducing the unanimous vote requirement for commutations to a 4-1 vote to recommend someone to the governor for a commutation.

And I co-sponsored legislation to repeal the death penalty. I also publicly supported District Attorney Krasner’s lawsuit to rule that the death penalty is cruel and unusual punishment.

I was the lead sponsor of legislation to reform and limit the use of solitary confinement in prison (Senate Bill 832).

I also supported probation reform. As Democratic Chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, I worked in the capitol to negotiate a bipartisan bill to reform probation. I am focused on reducing long probation terms that result in technical violators going back to prison, and on helping people get treatment rather than jail time.

3) Should marijuana be legalized for recreational use?

Yes. I have cosponsored Senate Bill 350 to legalize recreational marijuana.

4) Should privately-owned prisons be permitted in Pennsylvania?

Prisons must remain public. Private prisons are a disaster and have been a failure all over the United States. They do not focus on rehabilitating inmates, rather they focus on warehousing inmates and maximizing profits. Prisons must help inmates by providing education and medical treatment - including mental health and drug and alcohol addiction treatment. We have to treat the root cause of why someone committed a crime so they can get better and will not reoffend.

We should not be building more prisons but rather finding ways to build and or remediate our public schools, because lack of quality and equal education is unfortunately at the heart of all the challenges and hardships today. I helped bring back 1 billion dollars in cuts by Governor Corbett, and convinced Governor Wolf to open a state grant program that had previously been shut down to schools.

5) Should we ban the box in Pennsylvania?

Yes

6) Should PA continue to build new prisons?

No

7) Should PA begin to close prisons? Explain

PA has already closed two prisons and is about to close a third prison. Some successful criminal justice reforms I supported have reduced the prison population and led to the closure of state prisons.

8) Do you support an end to the death penalty?

Yes, I cosponsored legislation to repeal the death penalty.

9) When if ever, should a juvenile be tried as an adult?

A juvenile should never be tried as an adult. This concept is part of the failed "Get Tough on Crime" policies from the 90's. The prevailing science (much of which was pioneered here at UPenn) shows that the brain is simply not sufficiently developed before age 21 to be held totally responsible for all actions as an adult should. However, the mental health of all criminally involved youth should be carefully attended to and if that child develops into an equally dangerous adult, they should continue to receive whatever level of treatment is necessary to ensure public safety.

10) As a general matter, what do you think the state can do to reduce the murder rate in Philadelphia, while maintaining respect for civil liberties and the overall need for decarceration of our city?

The first step is to pass comprehensive criminal justice reforms that focus on treating offenders rather than locking people up and throwing away the key. We must provide people with the treatment they need for mental health issues, substance abuse disorders, or anger management so that these issues do not lead them to more violent acts.

The Republican majorities in Pennsylvania need to recognize that localities have differing needs relating to gun control. The murder rate in Philadelphia is driven by guns, yet our local government is prevented by the commonwealth from taking local action to address it. Worse yet, they keep trying to pass laws to penalize Philadelphia for the actions they attempt to take. It is time for the commonwealth to take the lives of Philadelphians seriously and allow us to enact a lost and stolen law and mandate universal background checks if they refuse to do so at the state level. These measures are preventative and deter illegal sales and will not result in more incarceration, but will result in lives saved.

### **IX. Campaign Finance Reform**

Would you support legislation to provide public financing for state and local election campaigns?

Yes.

In fact, I have co-sponsored legislation, pushed and voted for a number of other campaign finance reforms including:

- campaign contribution limits
- Prohibiting personal use of campaign funds
- Requiring disclosure for independent expenditures
- Closing the loophole on foreign corporate influence
- Allowing the Department of State to enforce public requests for campaign vouchers
- Expanding the mail in ballot option to all voters and require mail in ballot applicants to be placed on the permanent mail-in ballot list file. Once a voter applies for a mail in ballot they will receive a mail in ballot for every election. This legislation allows voters to permanently remain on the list for mail in ballots and does not require burdensome annual applications for mail in ballots.
- Allow municipalities to use ranked choice voting
- Allow for reverse ballot order so local offices appear before state - prevent ballot drop off
- Provides for early voting 15 days before a primary or general election
- Same day voter registration on Election Day.
- Automatic voter registration when submitting applications with various commonwealth agencies and entities, unless an individual opts out (Modeled after Oregon law).
- public financing of campaigns, no excuse absentee voting, same day voter registration and early voting. All of these bills have a singular goal to limit the influence of money in elections and to give power to people not wealthy campaign contributors.

### **X. Labor**

- 1) Would you support legislation to strengthen protection for workers trying to form or join a union?

Yes. I have supported numerous bills and policies to strengthen unions and to provide workers the ability to join unions. I recently support the Defenders Association and the work of their public defender lawyers and employees to form a union. I also supported SEIU 32 BJ efforts to organize building and janitorial workers in many residential and commercial buildings in Philadelphia. I was also an active supporter of efforts to unionize and support fair contracts for airport workers and nurses at the former Hahnemann Hospital.

We should also look to help organized labor to unionize existing large employers like Comcast.

- 2) Should the minimum wage be increased? If so, to what level and should the increase be indexed to inflation?

Yes minimum wage should be increased to \$12-15 per hour and it should be indexed to inflation.

- 3) Do you believe that Philadelphia and other municipalities should continue to be pre-empted from increasing the minimum wage on their own?

No.

- 4) Do you support privatization of retail liquor sales in Pennsylvania? Are there any other services that you believe should be considered for privatization?

No.

- 5) Philadelphia remains the most impoverished major city and about 75% of our residents lack bachelor's degrees. What policies would you implement to ensure that decent, high-paying jobs created here are accessible to the majority of our population, not just the relatively well-educated and already well off?

We need to do a couple of things to improve our economy and jobs. First, we can continue to work with great Pennsylvania programs like Ben Franklin Technology Partners and state sponsored angel investment funds that help to provide critical investments and operational assistance to Pennsylvania's start up companies. These companies have shown tremendous growth and created jobs and opportunities across PA and Philadelphia.

A great example of these startups is Nextfab on Washington Avenue in Senate District 1. This business is an innovative maker space. It allows Philadelphians access to 3D printing to create innovative models and products. In addition to Nextfab, BOK is another unique space in South Philly. Housed in a former high school, it houses many small businesses and has helped grow several of these small businesses.

Second, we need to improve Philadelphia's pre-k through 12 education system and offer students affordable higher education.

We need to give students a safe place to learn. In order to address asbestos and lead contamination in Philadelphia schools, I became a founding member of the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers Fund Our Facilities Coalition.

I cosponsored two bills, Senate Bills 555 and 556 to provide Philadelphia Schools with \$125 million to remove asbestos and remediate lead paint through surplus state funds and the general fund.

To create long term lasting funding improvements for Philadelphia schools I co-sponsored Senate Bill 362. This bill will provide \$400 million in additional funding each year to Philadelphia schools by phasing in the fair funding formula over the next four years.

I was the lead author of a budget sign on letter that was signed by all members of the Philadelphia Delegation urging Governor Wolf to immediately fund \$170 million in funding for toxic schools, to include a Healthy Schools Initiative to fund enviro issues in the PA Budget, and to implement the Fair Funding Formula to provide Philadelphia with \$400 million in additional funding.

Governor Wolf followed the delegation's advice and announced a \$1 billion plan to fund asbestos, lead, mold, and remediation of other toxins from schools across the commonwealth. Scranton, York, Harrisburg, Altoona, and other schools have the same problems with toxic schools. Four schools were recently closed in Scranton due to asbestos contamination. We must pass this program with the budget.

Once we give our students safe, healthy and well funded pre-k through 12 schools, we should help support them through free college tuition at community colleges or public colleges. I cosponsored several bills to provide free college tuition or substantially reduced tuition to students and working Pennsylvania families. I also cosponsored Senate Bill 400 - the Pennsylvania Student Higher Education Lending Protection (HELP) Act. The legislation seeks to help the 1.8 million Pennsylvania residents that carry an average of \$36,000 in student loan debt. The legislation helps students reduce their debt by:

- Issuing bonds to refinance \$1 billion in student debt into more affordable interest rates
- Allowing students to apply for a \$500 tax credit against the PA Income Tax
- Encouraging employers to help employees who have outstanding higher education loans by exempting from state and local taxes payments that employers make to an employee's 529 savings account, making payments to an employees outstanding student loan debt, or applying a cash equivalent to unused carryover paid time off to an employee's outstanding student loans.

I also cosponsored legislation to create a Pay It Forward Pay It Back (PFPB) program. The PFPB program creates a public fund from which students can borrow money to help fund their higher education. After students graduate and join the workforce, participants would pay back the amount borrowed interest free through a small deduction from their paychecks (4% deduction). The loan repayments would eventually create a self sustaining higher education fund.

I also support Governor Wolf's budget proposal to provide \$204 million in tuition assistance to students who attend state system of higher education schools. The assistance would supplement federal Pell grants and PHEAA grants to provide tuition-free education to thousands of students. The proposal requires students to live in Pennsylvania for each year they receive tuition assistance.

## **XI. Reforming Legislative Districts**

- 1) Do you support legislation that would (1) form an independent commission, and (2) apply sound methodologies, to draw all congressional, State House, and Senate districts fairly in Pennsylvania?

Yes, and I have cosponsored Senate Bills 1022 and 1023 to form an independent redistricting commission and to apply sound methodologies to draw all congressional, State House and State Senate districts fairly.

## **XII. Public Health**

Would you support state legislation to create a single-payer system in PA?

Yes, in fact I wrote and sponsored the first single-payer healthcare bill in 2009, my first year in office, long before it was part of the national conversation.

I have continued to author single-payer healthcare bills throughout my career. In fact, this session, Senator Muth and I are co-authoring a single-payer healthcare bill that will be introduced during this legislative session.

In addition, I fought for and voted to expand Medicaid in Pennsylvania to 650,000 Pennsylvanians. This was the single biggest expansion of healthcare in Pennsylvania history. It helped many working poor Pennsylvanians get access to affordable, accessible, and quality health care including mental health and substance abuse treatment.