

Public Education Funding Commission
Meeting Minutes
April 27, 2026

Location: Legislative Hall, House Hearing Room, with virtual access for the public

The Public Education Funding Commission (PEFC) meeting was held on April 27, 2026, with the following members in attendance:

Helen Anderson, Jose Aviles Rivera, Madeleine Bayard, Susan Brown, Eric Buckson, Sarah Celestin, Evelyn Edney, Emily Falcon, Jennifer Fuqua, Jason Hale, Taylor Hawk, Gary Henry, Nick Johnson, Lisa Lawson, Kevin Long, Cindy Marten, Ann Visalli, Ruth Ann Miller, Katherine Miro, Britney Mumford, Cassie Queen, Laura Sturgeon, David Tull, Kim Williams, Marcus Wright

Also participating were Sarah Barzee, WestEd; Anna Sullivan, WestEd; Denise Carter, Delaware Department of Education.

[Audio Recording of Meeting](#)

Welcome/Introductions

Secretary Marten opened with remarks thanking Chair Sturgeon, Commission members, the PEFC Technical Working Group, educators, advocates, families, community leaders, the Department of Education staff, and members of the public for their continued work and engagement. She emphasized the importance of modernizing Delaware's education funding system to better reflect student needs, align resources to priorities, and support transparency and accountability.

Chair Sturgeon welcomed Commission members and attendees and noted that the meeting represented an important step toward finalizing recommendations that will inform proposed bills that must be moved through the DE General Assembly before the end of the 2026 legislative session in order to meet the timeline proposed for implementation of a new system. Chair Sturgeon opened the meeting and invited Sarah Barzee from WestEd to conduct a verbal roll call. A quorum was confirmed and the meeting was called to order.

Approval of March 16, 2026 Meeting Minutes

The Chair requested a motion to approve the minutes of the March 16, 2026 meeting. Marcus Wright motioned to approve and Evelyn Edney seconded the motion. All members were in favor and the motion carried.

New Business

Chair Sturgeon reviewed the Commission's guiding values: adequacy, equity, flexibility with guardrails, transparency, and accountability. She noted that, following the meeting, she expected legislation would be filed reflecting the Commission's recommendations for Phase 1 implementation of the hybrid funding model.

Chair Sturgeon explained that the initial legislation proposed in the 2026 legislative session would not fully implement the formula immediately but would authorize the Department of Education to begin

the planning, systems updates, training, and implementation work needed in Phase 1. She noted that additional work would continue in Phase 2, including equalization, the potential for additional weights for student groups with high needs, tiered weights, and local funding reform.

The Chair noted that she expected two bills, Senate Bill 302 and 303, would be filed: one (SB303) related to implementation authority for the Department of Education and one related to continuation of the PEFC. She encouraged Commission members to participate in the legislative process by attending public hearings and providing public comment when these bills are heard in committee.

Implementation Timeline and Cost Update

Deputy Secretary Denise Carter provided an overview of the implementation timeline. She noted that the Department of Education submitted a \$2.8 million request in the Governor’s recommended budget to support Fiscal Year 2027 implementation activities, including system updates, website changes, training development for LEAs, community and school board engagement, and development of an accountability plan.

Carter explained that Phase 1 is expected to begin in July 2027 for Fiscal Year 2028 and would consolidate 32 funding streams into three categories: base funding, opportunity funding, and operational funding. She noted that Phase 1 would include the initial weights for select student groups (e.g., multilingual learners, CTE) considered by the Commission, but that weights would continue to be reviewed and considered in Phase II.

Carter further explained that Phase 2, planned for Fiscal Year 2029, would include continued work on equalization, consideration of additional weighting for student groups such as gifted and talented students, foster youth, unhoused youth, and students with 504 plans, and tiered weights for high-need student groups such as multilingual learners.

Nick Johnson provided an overview of the estimated costs of the new model. He emphasized that the estimate provided at this time is a snapshot based on September 30, 2025, enrollment data and may change based on factors such as enrollment, student demographics, CTE participation, and refinements to weights. The current estimate is approximately \$150 million to \$200 million in additional funding, not including equalization. Johnson noted that the CTE weight remains under review.

Commission members discussed the cost estimate, the importance of “holding LEAs harmless” during implementation, the need to align funding with student need, and the reality that future appropriations will ultimately determine the pace and scope of implementation. Commission members emphasized that the proposed model simplifies the current funding structure, increases transparency, and creates a clearer basis for making future funding decisions.

Next Steps

Chair Sturgeon noted that there would be no May meeting due to the short turnaround and the need to focus on filing and advancing proposed legislation. Commission members will receive copies of Senate Bill 302 and Senate Bill 303 once finalized. The Commission’s report to the General Assembly and the public is expected in early July and will include work completed through June 30, 2026.

Commission Vote

The Commission then proceeded to formal votes on five recommendations. Prior to voting, the Chair outlined the process for each recommendation, including motion, second, discussion, and roll-call vote.

Recommendation 1: A Hybrid Funding Model

After the Chair called for a motion to adopt the recommendation, a motion was made by Marcus Wright and seconded by Britney Mumford. The Commission considered the following recommendation:

The Commission recommends a multi-year phase-in approach to implement a hybrid funding model that blends elements of the current system with a weighted needs-based approach with initial weights in the following categories:

<i>Opportunity Funding</i>		
<i>Category</i>	<i>Weight</i>	<i>Dollar Amount</i>
<i>Low-income</i>	<i>0.675</i>	<i>\$3,343</i>
<i>Multi-Lingual Learners</i>	<i>0.47</i>	<i>\$2,328</i>
<i>Operational Funding</i>		
<i>Category</i>	<i>Weight</i>	<i>Dollar Amount</i>
<i>Low-income</i>	<i>0.675</i>	<i>\$2,190</i>
<i>Multi-Lingual Learners</i>	<i>0.47</i>	<i>\$1,525</i>
<i>Special Ed. Basic - Pre-K-12</i>	<i>0.48</i>	<i>\$1,558</i>
<i>Special Ed. Intense - Pre-K-12</i>	<i>0.67</i>	<i>\$2,174</i>
<i>Special Ed. Complex - Pre-K-12</i>	<i>1.54</i>	<i>\$4,997</i>
<i>Vocational*</i>	<i>0.2</i>	<i>\$649</i>

**still under review by the working group*

Version Date: April 2026

During discussion, members noted that the vocational/CTE weight remains under review. Members raised concerns shared by special education and student services directors regarding the need for guardrails to ensure related service dollars support services such as speech, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and assistive technology. The Chair acknowledged the importance of developing appropriate guardrails as part of implementation and noted that Section 504 may be considered in Phase 2.

Following discussion, the recommendation passed with the following votes:

- **25 Yes votes:** Helen Anderson, Jose Aviles Rivera, Madeleine Bayard, Susan Brown, Eric Buckson, Sarah Celestin, Evelyn Edney, Emily Falcon, Jennifer Fuqua, Jason Hale, Taylor Hawk, Gary Henry, Nick Johnson, Lisa Lawson, Kevin Long, Cindy Marten, Ann Visalli, Ruth Ann Miller, Katherine Miro, Britney Mumford, Cassie Queen, Laura Sturgeon, David Tull, Kim Williams, Marcus Wright
- **0 No votes**
- **0 Abstentions**

Recommendation 2: “Hold Harmless” Provision

After the Chair called for a motion to adopt the recommendation, a motion was made by Marcus Wright and seconded by Emily Falcon. The Commission considered the following recommendation:

The Commission recommends that LEAs do not experience any loss of state funding related to the implementation of the hybrid model until such time that Phase 2 of the formula is fully implemented and funded. Phase 2 is currently scheduled for July 2028 (FY 2029).

During discussion, Gary Henry raised concerns that an open-ended hold harmless provision could limit the ability to advance equity if not time-limited or otherwise constrained. Other members discussed the relationship between “hold harmless”, available appropriations, Phase 2 implementation, and the Commission’s ability to revisit the recommendation if funding conditions change. Members also clarified that the provision applies to losses related to implementation of the hybrid model and not to enrollment-driven funding changes.

Following discussion, the recommendation passed with the following votes:

- **24 Yes votes:** Helen Anderson, Jose Aviles Rivera, Madeleine Bayard, Susan Brown, Eric Buckson, Sarah Celestin, Evelyn Edney, Emily Falcon, Jennifer Fuqua, Jason Hale, Taylor Hawk, Nick Johnson, Lisa Lawson, Kevin Long, Cindy Marten, Ann Visalli, Ruth Ann Miller, Katherine Miro, Britney Mumford, Cassie Queen, Laura Sturgeon, David Tull, Kim Williams, Marcus Wright
- **1 No vote:** Gary Henry
- **0 Abstentions**

Recommendation 3: Equalization

After the Chair called for a motion to adopt the recommendation, a motion was made by Marcus Wright and seconded by Taylor Hawk. The Commission considered the following recommendation:

The Commission recommends continuing to freeze the Equalization formula at Fiscal Year 2009 levels in FY27. Additionally, the Commission recommends modernizing the equalization formula and implementing the updates by FY28.

Chair Sturgeon explained that ongoing property reassessment work and appeals, particularly in New Castle County, affect the data needed to modernize equalization. She emphasized that equalization remains a central equity issue because it addresses differences in districts’ ability to raise local revenue based on property wealth.

Members discussed the importance of modernizing equalization, the impact of property wealth disparities on students, and the Commission’s responsibility to continue this work with support from the Technical Working Group and subject-matter experts.

Following discussion, the recommendation passed with the following votes:

- **25 Yes votes:** Helen Anderson, Jose Aviles Rivera, Madeleine Bayard, Susan Brown, Eric Buckson, Sarah Celestin, Evelyn Edney, Emily Falcon, Jennifer Fuqua, Jason Hale, Taylor Hawk, Gary Henry, Nick Johnson, Lisa Lawson, Kevin Long, Cindy Marten, Ann Visalli, Ruth Ann Miller, Katherine Miro, Britney Mumford, Cassie Queen, Laura Sturgeon, David Tull, Kim Williams, Marcus Wright
- **0 No votes**
- **0 Abstentions**

Recommendation 4: Extension of the PEFC

After the Chair called for a motion to adopt the recommendation, a motion was made by Marcus Wright and seconded by Britney Mumford. The Commission considered the following recommendation:

The Commission recommends that the Public Education Funding Commission, established through House Concurrent Resolution 201, is re-established to continue to develop recommendations to implement ongoing improvements to the public education funding system in Delaware.*

**Included in draft bill SB303*

Chair Sturgeon noted that continuation of the PEFC is necessary to support ongoing work related to equalization, future weighted student groups, refinements to weights, and implementation monitoring. It was noted that this recommendation is included in draft Senate Bill 303.

Following discussion, the recommendation passed with the following votes:

- **24 Yes votes:** Helen Anderson, Jose Aviles Rivera, Madeleine Bayard, Susan Brown, Sarah Celestin, Evelyn Edney, Emily Falcon, Jennifer Fuqua, Jason Hale, Taylor Hawk, Gary Henry, Nick Johnson, Lisa Lawson, Kevin Long, Cindy Marten, Ann Visalli, Ruth Ann Miller, Katherine Miro, Britney Mumford, Cassie Queen, Laura Sturgeon, David Tull, Kim Williams, Marcus Wright
- **0 No votes**
- **0 Abstentions**

Recommendation 5: Local Funding Reform

The Commission considered the following recommendation:

The commission recommends that the General Assembly consider the local funding implications of implementation of the hybrid model and explore funding reform options.

Members discussed the importance of continuing local funding reform conversations, including the impact of referenda on districts, educators, and students. Commission members emphasized that

implementation of the hybrid model will have local implications and that those issues must remain part of the Commission's ongoing work.

Following discussion, the recommendation passed with the following votes:

- **24 Yes votes:** Helen Anderson, Jose Aviles Rivera, Madeleine Bayard, Susan Brown, Sarah Celestin, Evelyn Edney, Emily Falcon, Jennifer Fuqua, Jason Hale, Taylor Hawk, Gary Henry, Nick Johnson, Lisa Lawson, Kevin Long, Cindy Marten, Ann Visalli, Ruth Ann Miller, Katherine Miro, Britney Mumford, Cassie Queen, Laura Sturgeon, David Tull, Kim Williams, Marcus Wright
- **0 No votes**
- **0 Abstentions**

Public Comment

The Commission heard public comment from Kendall Massett, Christopher Stahl, and Blair Catlin Brown. Two written comments were also received and shared with Commission members prior to the meeting.

Adjournment

Chair Sturgeon thanked Commission members for their work and encouraged members to watch for copies of Senate Bill 302 and Senate Bill 303 and to consider participating in committee hearings. A motion to adjourn was made by Marcus Wright and seconded by Emily Falcon. The meeting adjourned at approximately 5:57 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Anna Sullivan for WestEd

Updated on 5/22/26