

As a social worker with 32 years of experience specializing in healthcare and addressing healthcare disparities, I understand firsthand the profound impact of social determinants of health on individuals and communities.

Social determinants of health – the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age – significantly influence health outcomes. These factors include economic stability, education, social and community context, health and healthcare, and neighborhood and built environment. While all these factors are crucial, education is undeniably the cornerstone for breaking the cycle of poverty and improving overall health.

The formula for foundation aid is in urgent need of an update. It currently does not reflect the needs of students with disabilities, who have different educational costs. It also fails to consider how life circumstances may affect children's learning, or what strategies can help them succeed. The formula's hold harmless provisions, which give funds to districts even when enrollment declines, can reduce their need for aid. It also doesn't fairly assess districts' ability and willingness to pay. Districts that have lost enrollment may be below the threshold the formula generates, and their economies and tax bases may not be strong enough to make up the difference.

The current funding formula, which uses outdated poverty and regional cost measures, is not providing the equitable support all students need. For example, it calculates student poverty rates using data from the 2000 Census, a measuring stick that many consider outdated. It's crucial to find a more equitable way to fund all students.

Respectfully submitted ,

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