

Promoters of school funding host meeting on MAEP petition

By JENNIFER LENAIN

Special to the Sun Herald

BAY ST. LOUIS — The Mississippi Association of Educators hosted the second of several meetings Wednesday evening urging full funding of the state's public schools.

At the meeting at Community Hall, state and local officials stressed the economic effects of chronic underfunding of public schools.

State Rep. Cecil Brown, D-Jackson, said a petition will begin circulating in May to have a constitutional amendment on the 2015 ballot that would beef up the Legislature's adherence to the Mississippi Adequate Education Program formula.

Basic public school funding in the state has been "underfunded" by \$1.3 billion between fiscal years 2009 and 2014.

"It's not a budget cut," state Rep. David Baria, D-Bay St. Louis, said, "it's a conscious decision that the state has mandated to underfund."

The formula, enacted in 1997 as a guide in the allocation of funding per school district, has been underfunded every year since, except in the 1997 and 2008 elec-

tion years.

From an economic standpoint, Baria said: "When employers are looking to locate here, they look at the system of education."

Bay-Waveland School District Superintendent Rebecca Ladner said full funding will provide more computers and help with the transition to Common Core.

"This will change how

teachers teach and students test," Ladner said. There will be "no paper and pencil tests next year," she said.

Urging support for the funding, Brown said, "It's not going to change until people change it."

"We have the most chronically underfunded schools in the country," Baria said. "Let's make this a part of our legislation."



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