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## *Legislative Priorities and Positions*

Legislative efforts will be consistent with the purposes of the Delaware PTA, and shall include stewardship of legislation through the regulatory and policy implementation process. The Delaware PTA state legislative program encompasses legislative initiatives defined below that support our legislative mission statement

### **Mission:**

To impact policy that benefits children by collaborating with decision makers on the development and implementation of legislative policies and initiatives in the areas of education, health and wellness and the judicial representation of Delaware's youth.

To collaborate in the creation and review, provide commentary, and to take positions related to legislation, regulation and policy areas that impact the well-being and education of the children of Delaware. This will be a collaborative effort and may include applicable Delaware PTA Committees.

To inform DPTA membership and solicit input on policy issues that impact the well-being and education of the children of Delaware.

### ***The Delaware PTA will:***

#### **Immediate priorities**

Promote and support legislation, resolutions and regulations which recognize the critical nature of family engagement in improving the outcomes for children via implementation of effective statewide support structures for family engagement to support all public schools in developing their individualized comprehensive family engagement programs.

Support and promote legislation that seeks to increase family engagement via full transparency at the district level by use of digital recordings and posting of those school board meetings.

Promote and support legislation that seeks to reduce class size and review and support legislation to ensure appropriate class sizes for all children.

Promote and support legislation and regulations to ensure verification which provides parental confidence that needs based funding flows and unit allocations, and associated staff supported by those units, follow and meet the needs of the students who earn the funding and to work to create dedicated unit funding counts for Special education students in the basic funding category in K-3<sup>rd</sup> grades.

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Promote and support legislation, including working through the preference task force to end both active and passive discrimination in school choice admission preferences for Charters, magnets and Vo-tech while simultaneously increasing attendance opportunities for all students.

Promote and support legislation and regulation to improve support for charter schools through increased collaboration between school districts and charter schools including providing comment to workgroups and taskforces who are assigned responsibility to these areas.

Collaborate through task force membership and other coalitions to support improvements to the IEP process and support effective legislation to implement this goal.

Collaborate through task force comments and other means to support the improvements of Autism support for children and collaborate in the development of effective legislation to implement this goal. Promote and support legislation to implement the Delaware strategic plan for Autism.

Identify, propose and support legislation to eliminate discrimination against children with disabilities which exists in current statute, regulation, guidance and policies.

Promote and support legislation to provide comprehensive and effective bullying prevention in schools in the 2015 legislative session.

Support and promote legislation that offers state funding in the form of block grants for schools to develop and implement academic accelerated programs.

Support and promote legislation that focuses on the development and expansion of early childhood education initiatives.

Monitor regulatory processes and the development and implementation of legislation for limitations on the use of restraint and seclusion in schools and programs which are paid for by DDOE. This shall include but is not limited to, requirements for family engagement in the decision making process for the use of seclusion.

Support and promote National PTA resolutions and initiatives which benefit the children of Delaware through legislative and policy advocacy.

Promote and support legislation, including working through the preference task force to end both active and passive discrimination in school choice admission preferences and attendance opportunities.



### **148 General Assembly**

Review impact and outcomes of prior legislation and promote additional legislation as needed to provide comprehensive and effective bullying prevention in schools in the 2013 legislative session.

Promote and support legislation to increase graduation rates and to maintain students in public schools prior to their graduation, by providing support flexibility for students at risk of dropping out and to increase the dropout age to 18.

Support legislation that provides funding for a parent/family and community engagement position in each school district.

Support and promote legislation that focuses on the development and expansion of early childhood education initiatives.

Promote and support legislation sufficient state funding to maintain comprehensive programs at the secondary level.

Oppose legislation or regulation that would mandate the use of a single indicator or test to determine student promotion or placement.

Promote and support legislation and regulation to improve college and career ready students by properly measuring the value of broader life functional skills which are part of the educational curriculum in the DPAS and other programs

Supports current code keeping school board elections in the month of May and those elections are held at our schools and support sun setting provision to any bill attempting to move school board elections to coincide with the general election.

Promote and support legislation that would end excessive testing programs of students.

Promote and support legislation and regulation to update school design standards under the major capital bonding programs to reflect current best practices in parent engagement, special education, student health supports and other advancements in education.

Review and comment on the renewal of the ESEA waiver to ensure the ESEA waiver is implemented with fidelity in both regulation and policy.

Provide comment on ESEA reauthorization

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Provide comment on IDEA reauthorization

Promote and support legislation to cap the transfer of transportation costs for public school students from state to local districts at a maximum of 10%.

Promote and support legislation for certifications for paraprofessionals to serve special populations both regular and special education classrooms, with step increases for these certifications.

Promote and support legislation to implement the Delaware strategic plan for Autism.

Promote and support legislation for autism training for all educators who support children with Autism

Promote and support legislation to have needs based funding follow students into special and private placement, when these placements are needed to provide FAPE or to protect the wellbeing of the child.

Promote and support legislation or regulations requiring school buses be equipped with seat belts or safety restraints that must meet minimum federal motor vehicle safety standards and urges school districts to implement their use.

Promote and support legislation to strengthen the Delaware Code relating to sexual abuse of children.

Promote and support early childhood education which is structured inclusive for all interested families

### **Short term initiatives**

1) Promote and support legislation that mandates that all local school districts digitally record all monthly school board meetings and public workshops.

**Rationale:** With the enormous family obligations and parents work schedules this will allow for individuals to listen to audio recording of all public meetings that are held within school districts. This will permit families to be engaged in their children's schools and their districts. The bill would require that all public meetings of the boards of education of traditional public school districts, vo-tech school districts, and public meetings of charter school boards of directors be digitally recorded and made available to the public on the district's and charter school's websites within seven business days. The recordings will not be considered the official board minutes.

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Red Clay Consolidated School District, Christina School District, and the Capital School District are currently the only districts to voluntarily provide the public digital recordings of their board public session meetings via the district's websites.

The Delaware State Board of Education is required by the State Board of Education to make available within one business day digital recordings of its board meetings on the Delaware Department of Education's website.

2) Promote and support legislation that mandates a weighted funding formula. Similar to needs based fund funding, state funds (this does not include local funding) should be allocated for high risk population, ELL (English Language Learners) and special education students. The current status is that local school districts can raise taxes without going to referendum through "tuition tax" to fund these programs. Delaware PTA supports a change to the funding that allows for the state to allocate funding based on the need of all the populations of high needs students including special education, high poverty/low income and other at risk populations.

**\*Rationale:** If the state mandates each school district to have meaningful inclusion then the funding should be in place to support the implementation and sustainability of robust inclusion programs. High risk populations (high poverty students, Title One, and students with different learning requirements other than general education) require the same individual education plans in order for them to increase student performance. The cost of this should not be incumbent on the local school districts. A line item within the state budget is necessary to support these children. Furthermore, an extensive education plan should be provided for all students who are identified as at risk with criteria that is agreed upon by an IEP team.

3) Promote and support legislation that provides state funding for all schools to have a guidance counselor that does not count toward a school's unit count. Additionally, at schools with more than 40% poverty (identified by free and reduced lunch or other formulas that identifies low income students) the state needs to provide a social worker that is not paid for through the school's unit count.

**\*Rationale:** Schools that are receiving a large percentage (over 40%) of Title One funds are predominately filled with students with great need and therefore, the state should be providing funding for all supports needed to help these students succeed academically.



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4) Promote and support legislation that will allow the advancement of educator compensation and careers. Delaware PTA supports legislation that will allow the advancement of educator compensation and careers.

Delaware PTA supports:

- A career pathway for educators with few and meaningful steps.
- Leadership roles for educators to receive additional pay for leadership responsibilities.
- Senior leadership roles for a small sub-set of educators who have demonstrated the highest levels of effectiveness and served in leadership roles.
- Levels of base pay at all steps in the career pathway
- Levels of supplemental pay for leadership roles
- Applicability of the new system and opt-in mechanisms

**\*Rationale:** Educators should be receiving professional development and enhancements in order to develop new leaders and administrators. If the profession of education is to thrive and flourish, it is incumbent upon the state to provide avenues in which educators can grow into future leaders. This will sustain our education system.

### **Long Term Initiatives**

Promote and support legislation that provides comprehensive services and developmentally appropriate education programs for young children and their families.

Support and promote National PTA resolutions and initiatives which benefit the children of Delaware through legislative and policy advocacy.

Promote and support legislation which acknowledges the balance between academic curriculum and the functional curricular areas including social development, organizational skill, and other life skill which are necessary for children to be college, career, and live ready and the importance of metrics to ensure these areas are addressed

Promote and support legislation that would create a new funding unit category for certified school social workers.

Promote and support legislation that would create a funding unit for certified counselors in public schools.

Promote and support legislation for revenue neutral conversion of outdated property assessments to a current assessment system, based on a 5 year rolling reassessment for the purposes of providing reduced and representative tax rates and providing for inflationary factors

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Support an increase in state funding for permanent school nurses that will guarantee a minimum of one full time nurse in every school.

Promote and support legislation that would mandate certified counselors in public schools – Kindergarten through twelfth grade.

### **Supportive opportunities**

Support legislation to provide adequate financial resources that support carefully monitored childcare programs that ensure personnel and facilities meet acceptable standards

Support legislation that would establish a statewide supervisor/coordinator for early childhood services.

Support legislation that would improve the coordination and delivery of social, and health services to children and families.

Support legislation that would provide equitable access to quality, affordable healthcare for all children, youth, and pregnant women.

Support legislation requiring background checks on all individuals purchasing handguns in this state.

Support legislation to protect children and youth from dangerous weapons and firearms in the home, school, and community.

### **Emerging opportunities**

The Delaware PTA executive board will authorize executive board policy positions, and priorities for emerging or critical areas of legislation, regulation or policies between the annual conventions meeting that do not conflict with the above positions.