



2023 LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM

Philadelphia Federation of Teachers Jerry T. Jordan, President

The PFT calls on legislators at all levels of government to commit to and prioritize an investment agenda that is laser-focused on ensuring that the urgent needs of our young people are met. Amidst an ongoing global pandemic and a crisis of gun violence across the nation, these investments and priorities are more critical than ever.

Many of the items outlined in this document are a means of securing resources to address critical needs of our young people. Policy positions are not outlined in full in this document.

Ensuring additional resources for public education will enable holistic investment in these key areas and more:

- Addressing the staffing crisis in schools
- Reduction of class size
- Addressing the school facilities crisis
- Improving access to services for students with special needs
- Improving access to services for English Language Learners
- Increasing number of school counselors, nurses, librarians, and support staff
- Increasing funding for and access to the arts
- Increasing access to social services in schools
- Increasing recruitment and retention efforts of African American teachers and educators of color
- Expanding the community school model
- Increasing funding for and access to CTE programs

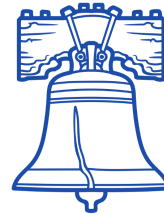
Priorities are identified by the applicable area(s) of government:



FEDERAL



STATE



CITY

Sign on to this platform by visiting: pft.org/platform2023

CHARTER FUNDING AND OVERSIGHT



Restoration of the charter school line item

When the Corbett administration eliminated the charter school reimbursement line item, public schools across the commonwealth lost [\\$224 million](#) in funding from 2009-2010 alone. Philadelphia's share was \$109 million.

Estimates for today balloon to \$300 million a year in lost revenue for public schools in Philadelphia alone, with a statewide loss of likely double or more.

The return of lost funding will enable critical investments in our students including increased academic, mental health, and social emotional support by way of smaller class sizes, after school programs, increased number of support staff, and so much more. Additionally, this funding can and should be used to address the facilities crisis plaguing school buildings.



Addressing special education funding discrepancy

For students with special needs, charter schools receive a set amount regardless of the student's individual needs. In traditional public schools, the funding is designated by the student's need classification.

This leads charter schools to actively pursue recruitment of students with special needs that do not require significant interventions and to discourage enrollment of students whose needs are more costly



Accountability and transparency

At the state level, addressing issues of charter accountability and transparency will be essential.



Local charter moratorium

Coupled with the state legislative efforts, we urge a local moratorium on new charters and encourage discussion and action on all levels to ensure that charter school funding and oversight is thoroughly overhauled.

FACILITIES CRISIS



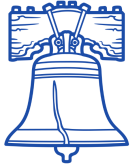
Green schools/school remediation legislation

The time is now to address the crisis of toxic schools. Legislation should be similar to what has previously been introduced by [Representative Fiedler and Senator Hughes](#), is essential.



Green New Deal for Schools

Philadelphia's schools need a [Green New Deal](#), and we need it now. Not only does it provide an historic \$1.43 trillion investment in our schools, it does so in a way that addresses inequity, that creates union jobs, and that truly moves the needle on environmental sustainability. Addressing the toxic schools crisis while investing in sustainability and the future of our young people is an essential step forward.



Facilities oversight

At the city level, in addition to funding, the city should increase oversight mechanisms in order to ensure that the appropriate remediation programs are implemented and done so in a transparent and appropriate manner.

ADDITIONAL FUNDING MECHANISMS



Equitable distribution of funding

Children learning English, children with special needs, and students experiencing poverty, need access to the resources they need to thrive. Funding mechanisms can and should be designed to address the ongoing inequity in public education.



Tax abatement

At the City level, we should eliminate corporate tax breaks and severely restrict the tax abatement. [Good Jobs First's nationwide report](#) shows that corporate tax breaks and abatements in Philadelphia cost more than \$112 million in lost revenue for schools in 2019.

This is, by \$40 million, the largest loss for any school district in the nation. We are in support of proposals to entirely eliminate the portion of the abatement that should be funding the District.



Additional funding

Additional funding mechanisms for education must also be secured at the city, state, and federal levels.

We will advocate for and support measures that increase the resources that support our students and educators.

GUN VIOLENCE CRISIS



FEDERAL



STATE



CITY

Multifaceted approach to address gun violence crisis

Amidst an ongoing crisis of gun violence that has claimed the lives of far too many, with Black and brown people far more vulnerable to this crisis. A lethal combination of racism and bigotry is plaguing this nation. No one should have to fear going to school, going to work, going to a club, going to the grocery store, or simply existing in fear.

A response to this crisis must be multifaceted to include a host of approaches:

- Increased funding and resources for public education, extra curricular activities, and community services
- Local, state, and federal funding for anti-violence initiatives
- Removing the preemption law at the state level that prevents Philadelphia from implementing its own firearms regulations
- Federal legislation that prohibits AR-15s and other weapons of war
- Additional common sense gun reform at all levels of government

WORKING AND LEARNING CONDITIONS



Addressing requirements placed on students and educators,

including but not limited to the following:

→ the overuse of standardized testing to grade students, educators, schools, and entire districts

→ the extraordinary amount of paperwork required of educators that serves no purpose in actually addressing the needs of students or improving the practice of educators



FEDERAL



STATE



CITY

Addressing the staffing crisis in schools

The staffing crisis in America's public schools is at a crisis point. Both locally and across the nation, we are seeing and hearing the catastrophic impacts of vacancies across the board.

From teachers to nurses to counselors to support staff, the crisis has far reaching implications every day. In July 2022, the AFT Teacher and School Staff Shortage Task Force (of which PFT President Jerry Jordan was a part) released a report that was adopted at the AFT biennial convention. The report, [linked here](#), includes a host of recommendations to address the crisis, many of which can be implemented at a state level. A summary of the recommendations is [linked here](#).

The broad categories of recommendations include the following:

- Revitalize the Educator and School Staff Pipeline*
- Create Positive Working and Learning Conditions for All
- Provide Workers with Trust, Time, Tools, and Training to Do Their Jobs
- Provide Sustainable and Commensurate Compensation and Benefits
- Utilize Union Voice and Strength to Impact Change at All Levels

*In Philadelphia, we have negotiated, designed, and implemented an extraordinarily successful Paraprofessionals Career Pathway program. This program can serve as a state and nation-wide model for a career development program.

OSHA Protections



At a state level, we support the passage of legislation that extends Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) protections to public sector workers. Currently, public sector workers, including educators, are excluded from basic workplace health and safety measures.



Richard Trumka PRO Act

At a federal level, we support the passage of the PRO Act which protects the right to organize and addresses deep flaws in federal labor laws. More on the PRO Act [here](#).

This legislation seeks to empower public service workers with the freedom to join a union and collectively negotiate for fair compensation, safer job conditions and better public services for the communities they serve.

OPPOSED: VOUCHER, ANTI-WORKER LEGISLATION



OPPOSED: Vouchers in any form

No matter the form, [vouchers harm public schools](#). Whether in the form of EITC (Educational Improvement Tax Credit) expansion, ESA (Education Savings Accounts) creation, or any other mechanism, vouchers siphon money from traditional public schools without any fiscal, operational, administrative, or academic performance accountability or transparency.

Schools receiving EITC funding, despite being paid with taxpayer money, may (and do) refuse to enroll, or restrict enrollment of, students for virtually any reason, including religious affiliation, disability, discipline, or academic history. Instead of working to identify ways that the legislature can live up to its constitutional obligation to fully and fairly fund public education, EITC and any form of vouchers sets the stage for another corporate giveaway and an inequitable distribution of resources. Tax breaks at the expense of our young people must be vehemently opposed.



OPPOSED: Anti-worker legislation

We will be monitoring legislation to identify any anti-worker bills that are advancing, and we will vehemently oppose efforts to prevent workers from advocating for better working conditions.

We oppose privatization efforts, and we oppose any and all anti-union legislation. Further, we will continue advocating for fair and equitable contracts for educators and all of the labor movement.

To add your name as an endorser of this platform, visit:

pft.org/platform2023 or e-mail Hillary Linardopoulos (HillaryL@pft.org).