



LEGISLATIVE POSITION MEMO

Philadelphia Federation of Teachers
Jerry T. Jordan, President

MARCH 12, 2024

TO: Members of the General Assembly

CC: Hon. Governor Josh Shapiro, Hon. Secretary of Education Dr. Khalid Mumin

FROM: Jerry T. Jordan, President

RE: LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

Governor Shapiro's education funding proposal

Funding mechanisms can and should be designed to address the ongoing inequity in public education. By implementing the Governor's plan, we have a chance to invest nearly \$1.1 Billion in public education, including a nearly \$900 Million investment in a new formula that addresses the inequities laid out in the historic school funding lawsuit. For years, the inequitable distribution of funding has meant that Black and Brown students and students experiencing poverty have been shortchanged and have been denied essential resources. In addition to the nearly \$900 Million invested in a new formula, Governor Shapiro proposed a much-needed \$200 Million increase in Basic Education Funding. The PFT wholeheartedly [supports](#) these investments.

Green schools/school remediation legislation

The time is now to address the crisis of toxic schools. We support Governor Shapiro's call for an additional \$300 Million in recurring revenue for schools. We urge the legislature to advance even more funding for addressing the facilities crisis. Legislation should be similar to what has previously been introduced by [Representative Fiedler and Senator Hughes](#).

Opposition to vouchers in any form

Our position on EITC expansion and vouchers in any form has been clear and is research-backed. It bears repeating that Judge Renée Cohn Jubelirer's ruling in the school funding lawsuit speaks to our system of public education-not private schools. Any legislation that seeks to circumvent that ruling by creating or expanding upon private school vouchers circumvents that obligation and makes our goals of equity that much more elusive.

NCPE has a [toolkit](#) on vouchers that provides important information and facts. *We will provide additional information on vouchers shortly.*

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.

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.

Multifaceted approach to address the 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

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.

We support efforts underway in Pennsylvania, such as [Senator Hughes'](#) bill to provide pay for student teachers.

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](#).