

PAULDING COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT



BOARD OF EDUCATION

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LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES 2022

2022 PAULDING COUNTY LEGISLATIVE DELEGATION

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STATE FUNDING OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

PRIORITY: Approximately 65 percent of the Paulding County School District's revenue comes from State funding sources, compared to a statewide average of 53 percent. This means the District is extremely vulnerable to changes in State funding. Therefore, we request the elimination of "austerity reductions" of the Quality Basic Education (QBE) Act and allocate to local school districts all funding earned under the statutorily required formula.

PRIORITY: We request formula modifications to QBE to accurately reflect inflation, true costs of transportation, and, to include a funding weight for economically disadvantaged students, funding for safety and security and increased allocations for counselors, social workers, psychologists and nurses. Furthermore, due to the complexities in State funding and its unique impact on districts like PCSD, the District would like to be engaged whenever changes in funding methodologies are considered. All bills which reduce funding or place a financial burden on local school districts should include a one-year delay in implementation and a fiscal note detailing the budgetary impacts.

PRIORITY: As a low wealth district, PCSD is highly dependent on the State Equalization Grant. As the fourth largest recipient of equalization funds, this grant accounts for 8 percent of the district's total annual revenue. Therefore, we request continuation of the Equalization Grant to support low wealth districts.

PRIORITY: Increase reimbursement rates for the State Capital Outlay Program to reflect current market construction costs and maintain the current regulations regarding the utilization of E-SPLOST funds.

MAINTAIN LOCAL CONTROL OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

PRIORITY: We request that you support the responsibility of local boards of education to govern local public schools, including such matters as setting local millage rates, determining spending for the education of children, making instructional delivery and resource decisions, and establishing school calendars. The establishment of the annual school-year calendar, including starting and ending dates and the establishment of the instructional day, should result solely with local boards of education. Given the diverse communities and needs throughout our state, it is our belief that these and other decisions are best made by elected officials closest to the individuals they represent.

PRIORITY: The Board of Education recently approved a resolution calling for maintaining a 50 percent exemption on all education ad valorem property taxes levied by the school district for Paulding property owners 65 years of age or older, but exempting them entirely from ad valorem taxation to pay interest on or to retire school bond indebted-

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edness. Additionally, the resolution calls for a two-year phase-in to lower the age at which seniors receive a 100-percent exemption from all education ad valorem property taxes to 68 years from the current 70 years. Beginning Jan. 1, 2023, property owners 69 years of age and older would be completely exempt from all education ad valorem property taxes, and beginning Jan. 1, 2024, the age for those exemptions would lower to 68. The school district requests this local legislation be considered and approved by the Legislature.

PROGRAM FUNDING

- PRIORITY:** The Paulding County Board of Education believes that use of instructional technology better prepares students for post-secondary opportunities and the 21st century work force. Therefore, we urge the General Assembly to fund school-based instructional technology specialists and technology infrastructure and resources. Sufficient technology resources are critical to support the education of students in our digital age. Technology resources necessary to support our district come with a substantial cost for the appropriate infrastructure including network, hardware, equipment, systems, training, and personnel. Therefore, we urge the General Assembly to include funding for technology budgets, providing for personnel, infrastructure, and equipment considerations, for all state technology-based mandates.
- PRIORITY:** The Paulding County Board of Education urges funding for the expansion of virtual education, innovative educational opportunities, digital instructional resources and technology infrastructure, platforms, and equipment to accommodate our virtual teaching and learning needs of today.
- PRIORITY:** The Paulding County Board of Education requests an increase in student transportation funding. PCSD's FY22 budget for student transportation is \$18.7 million, however the district will only receive \$1.4 million in State funding or 8 percent of the projected cost.
- PRIORITY:** Review antiquated special education funding formulas, which in some cases still utilizes special education counts from 1997. Review the use of Title I as a method for statewide allocations as opposed to Full Time Equivalent (FTE), which costs the district millions in Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER) funds.

STUDENT/STAFF SAFETY

- PRIORITY:** Provide the funding for salary, benefits, and training of one school nurse per school.
- PRIORITY:** Provide the funding for salary, benefits, and training of one School Resource Officer (SRO) per school.
- PRIORITY:** Provide state funding to decrease the school-counselor-to-student ratio from 1:450 to 1:250 as nationally recommended.
- PRIORITY:** Provide funding for appropriate school personnel to provide access to high quality academic, behavioral, and mental health supports.
- PRIORITY:** Provide school districts with the appropriate resources to maintain a safe and secure environment for students and staff.

RECRUITING AND RETAINING STAFF

- PRIORITY:** As a District, our primary asset is our people. In fact, a quality staff is the single greatest contributor to student achievement. Therefore, in order to attract high quality teachers and administrators, we request that measures be taken to protect and strengthen Georgia's Teacher Retirement System (TRS).
- PRIORITY:** Fully fund the remaining \$2000 teacher raise commitment as outlined by Governor Kemp.
- PRIORITY:** The Paulding County Board of Education supports addressing the long-term shortage of teachers in our classrooms by permitting retired educators to serve children full-time in high-need teaching positions without losing their retirement benefits if they agree to pay a percentage of their salaries to TRS.