

MSEA Legislative Priorities 2017

Creating and supporting world-class schools starts with guaranteeing that all students have the opportunity to learn. We will support this goal with unwavering commitments to funding and programs that meet the growing and diverse needs of all children.

1. Protecting vital investments for our schools, students, and educators

As the Kirwan Commission on Education Finance develops its final recommendations, we will seek full funding under existing state aid for education, including the full inflation factor. MSEA also supports the state keeping its promise to educators by making the full actuarial required pension contribution and the \$75 million supplemental payment. MSEA calls on legislators to provide ongoing relief to school boards to address a gap in what is due to cover the normal cost pension payment over the next few years. In the capital budget, MSEA supports expanded school construction funding—\$500 million in FY2018—to help address the \$4.5 billion in backlogged projects. We will advocate for high standards and protections, including prevailing wage and appropriate building and safety standards.

2. Implementing the Every Student Succeeds Act and creating opportunities for students to learn

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the landmark federal education law passed last year, places huge responsibility on states to take advantage of this opportunity to move away from a top-down, test-heavy approach to school accountability. MSEA calls on the General Assembly to prioritize opportunities for students in the development of Maryland's school accountability model. When schools need extra supports, those improvements should be led by educators, local school boards, and other local stakeholders. We must block efforts to use the federal law to weaken any state laws that would make it easier for for-profit companies and privatization to occur in our schools and districts.

3. Creating a positive and safe school climate

MSEA supports school discipline reforms that prioritize restorative practices, social and emotional learning, and ban suspensions for pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students. To accomplish these reforms, we need increased funding and commitments to hire new personnel, including school counselors, school psychologists, pupil personnel workers, and behavior interventionists.

4. Focusing the Kirwan Commission on key student needs

The Kirwan Commission will recommend a record investment in K-12 education—as the Thornton Commission did more than a decade ago—and it is critical that those additional resources go to filling important resource equity gaps in the schools with students who need the most help. MSEA will strive to build support for dedicated funding streams for proven strategies like universal pre-kindergarten, community schools, smaller class sizes, high-quality new educator mentoring, and competitive, professional salaries for both teachers and educational support professionals.

MSEA engages in hundreds of other education-related topics and legislation. Our efforts to support schools, school employees, students, and all Maryland working families include:

- **Reducing mandated standardized testing and increasing time to learn**
For the last few years, a consensus has been built among elected officials, parents, and educators that there is an urgent need to address the negative consequences of over-testing with comprehensive action. Unfortunately, the state testing commission's recommendations have been widely ignored and students in many districts across the state are facing just as much testing this year. MSEA will advance legislation to limit mandated testing to 2% of each academic year, ensuring that 98% of the state-mandated hours in the school year are reserved for instruction. Educators will also work to reduce standardized testing in public pre-kindergarten, as we did with kindergarten last year. Our youngest learners should be learning, playing, and developing a love for school—not sitting for disruptive standardized tests that don't help them or their teachers.
- **Rejecting vouchers and other plans that send state dollars to private schools**
As the Trump Administration unrolls its \$20 billion vouchers plan—with much of the funding purportedly coming from Title I funds for high poverty schools—it's more important than ever that Maryland focuses on addressing unmet needs facing our public schools, rather than doubling down on schemes that divert public money to private schools that fail to meet the same standards of inclusion and accountability as public schools. MSEA will oppose the BOOST program and any other voucher-like program proposed during the 2017 legislative session.
- **Supporting coalition efforts to provide earned sick and paid family leave**
Providing sick and safe leave to employees helps build stronger families, healthier communities, workplaces with happier and more productive employees, and students who are ready to learn. MSEA will continue to prioritize the needs of working families.
- **Defending and strengthening Maryland's charter school law**
In light of the changing federal landscape, it is critical that Maryland leads the way to oppose for-profit charter schools and privatization efforts of any kind. Maryland's charter school law is the best in the nation because it strikes the right balance between local control, accountability, and innovative instruction.

For more information, contact MSEA Government Relations, 410/263-6600; mseagr@mseanea.org.

Connect with us.

