



2020-21 LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY AGENDA/ACTION PLAN

NJSBA Bylaws state that the Association shall adopt positions consistent with its policy; encourage, promote and assist in the development of local, county and statewide legislative networks; testify at meetings or hearings of the state Legislature and state Board of Education, and initiate policy recommendations for consideration by the Board of Directors.

Following is a template for legislative advocacy and action:

ACCOUNTABILITY:

- Promote implementation of appropriate standards for school district performance.
- Advocate for changes to statute and regulation that will eliminate the unnecessary administrative workload placed on school districts.
- Advocate for elimination of restrictive regulations on local school districts and board of education members.
- Promote awareness of the need for accurate data and information in the district monitoring process.

ADVOCACY:

- Expand and strengthen the statewide grassroots network for both state and federal advocacy efforts.
- Promote greater participation at NJSBA advocacy events and county school boards association functions.
- Promote the establishment of county school boards association legislative committees.

FUNDING:

- Advocate for amendments to the school funding formula that advance NJSBA policy on school finance.
- Advocate for full funding of the state's school finance formula to meet the needs of all students in a manner that is consistent, equitable, reliable and sustainable.
- Raise board members' awareness of the impact of state budget shortfalls on the school funding formula.
- Educate state and federal legislators and the public on the need for full funding of all state and federally mandated programs.
- Support local board efforts to initiate grass roots citizen action to reduce overreliance on property taxes.
- Engage in concerted efforts to reform the methodology for funding state aid for school construction.
- Oppose the use of public funds for non-public schools.
- Actively seek direct state funding for charter school operations so as not to diminish the resources available to the traditional public schools in the same district.
- Oppose any reduction in school aid figures after the Commissioner of Education notifies school districts of their state aid entitlements immediately following the Governor's budget address.
- Advocate for a proportional share of payments in lieu of taxes, approved by municipal governing bodies, to be directed to local educational spending.

LOCAL GOVERNANCE:

- Advocate for the ability of local boards of education to secure the best possible school district leadership by eliminating unnecessary restrictions.
- Promote recognition that attempted one-size-fits-all general solutions may create unintended adverse impacts for individual districts.
- Advocate for maximum local control over the budgetary process.
- Advocate for adjustments to the local levy cap to give school districts the flexibility to meet extraordinary funding issues.
- Advocate for relief from state and federal restrictions over the use of school district funds.
- Promote public awareness of the limitations placed on local school boards through overly restrictive federal and state oversight.
- Advocate for local board input on the opening of charter schools.
- Advocate retaining the board of education's authority in making personnel decisions.
- Promote public awareness of the importance of school boards and encourage greater participation and candidacy.

SCHOOL DISTRICT STAFFING/COLLECTIVE BARGAINING:

- Eliminate statutory protections of absolute seniority; advocate for changes to the Last-In-First-Out (LIFO) practice so that districts facing reductions in staff are provided flexibility in retaining the best teachers
- Advocate for the permanent continuation of health care premium sharing by board of education employees and ensure they continue to pay a fair share of the costs of health benefits.
- Advocate for policies and reforms that reduce the overall cost of providing board of education employees with health insurance coverage.
- Preserve the managerial prerogative of boards of education to sub-contract or privatize non-instructional staff and services when such action is in the financial and educational interests of the district.
- Oppose any proposals that would extend tenure or tenure-like protections to non-certified staff.
- Protect boards of education from the imposition of any excise taxes or surcharges that may be imposed on high-cost health plans by the federal government pursuant to the federal Affordable Care Act or any other law.

SPECIAL EDUCATION:

- Increase awareness of districts' responsibilities to students with special needs under state and federal laws.
- Advocate for direct state funding of costs related to extraordinary special education transportation.
- Advocate for full federal funding of IDEA.
- Advocate for reasonable limits on costs associated with placements at private schools for the handicapped.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION:

- Advocate for implementation of the recommendations of NJSBA's Task Force on Educational Opportunities for the Non-College-Bound Learner.
- Advocate for enhancement of opportunities through joint district/vocational school/community college collaborative programs.