



2022-2023 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:

- Advocate for changes to statute and regulation that will eliminate the unnecessary administrative workload placed on school districts.
- Advocate for elimination and oppose the imposition of restrictive regulations on local school districts and board of education members.

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.
- Assist with the establishment of county school boards association legislative committees.
- Execute the advocacy-focused objectives and goals of the Association's Strategic Plan for 2022-2024.
- Provide resources to local board of education members to assist with the Association's advocacy efforts as well as for their own local priorities.

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.
- Educate state and federal legislators and the public on the need for full funding of all state and federally mandated programs.
- Provide property tax levy cap flexibility to districts experiencing reductions in state aid that are below their local fair share and spending below adequacy.
- Support local board efforts to initiate grass roots citizen action to reduce overreliance on property taxes.
- Engage in concerted efforts to promote state support for school construction projects and facility upgrades in all districts.
- 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 (PILOTs), approved by municipal governing bodies, to be directed to local educational spending.

LOCAL GOVERNANCE:

- 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.
- Promote public awareness of the limitations placed on local school boards through overly restrictive federal and state oversight.
- Advocate for greater local board input on the opening of charter schools.
- Promote public awareness of the importance of school boards and encourage greater participation and candidacy.

SCHOOL DISTRICT STAFFING COLLECTIVE BARGAINING:

- Advocate retaining the board of education's authority in making personnel decisions and oppose proposals that would provide overreaching job protections to school staff.
- Advocate for legislative and regulatory relief to alleviate staffing shortages, streamline the certification process, and strengthen the teacher pipeline, particularly in difficult to fill subject areas.
- 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 relief for districts experiencing increases in health care costs due to revisions to statutes governing school employees' health benefits, while protecting the financial gains realized by other districts.
- Support policies and reforms that reduce the overall cost of providing board of education employees with health insurance coverage, and oppose the shifting of such costs onto boards of education and taxpayers.

SPECIAL EDUCATION:

- Increase awareness of districts' responsibilities to students with special needs under state and federal laws.
- Continue ongoing efforts to increase appropriations for Extraordinary Special Education Aid.
- Advocate for full federal funding of IDEA.
- Advocate for reasonable limits on costs associated with placements at private schools for students with disabilities.
- Seek legislative or regulatory changes that will help increase the pool of qualified special education teachers.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

- Ensure districts have sufficient resources that will enable them to enhance, and close gaps in, student achievement.
- Support increased and consistent funding for programs, such as the School Based Youth Services Program, that will help districts address the mental and social-emotional needs of students.
- Promote the findings and recommendations of the NJSBA's reports on education during the COVID-19 pandemic to help school districts and students deal with pandemic-related losses and delays in both academic and social-emotional learning.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION:

- Promote the findings and 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.
- Support initiatives that will expand the pool of qualified career and technical education (CTE) teachers.
- Promote policies that will provide students with multiple pathways to career success.