



INDIANA SCHOOL BOARDS
ASSOCIATION

Working Together – Let's ADVOCATE FOR Public Schools.

2022 Advocacy Guide

Presented by the
Indiana School Boards Association

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Foreword

School boards in every school corporation in Indiana are charged with the awesome responsibility of making decisions to ensure that the schools are well-managed and budgets are balanced. The quality of education for the more than 1 million students who attend Indiana public schools is largely dependent on how well those decisions are made. Undoubtedly, many decisions made by the Indiana General Assembly also significantly impact school corporation governance across the state. Typically more than 100 -150 bills are introduced each session impacting K-12 education — with a few dozen or more bills becoming law every year. That is why it is crucial that school board members – now more than ever before – become active and engaged advocates for K-12 public education.

Why Is Your Advocacy So Important?

- Because you have firsthand understanding of your school corporation's needs and what is necessary to provide a quality education.
- Because you must deal with the complexities of balancing your local budgets annually.
- Especially now, at a time when social and political challenges confront K-12 public education more than ever before, your voice representing the best interests of Hoosier students must be heard.
- You have an important message to deliver to your state senators and representatives, the media, and your local community.
- You have the clout to inform and influence the development of sound K-12 education policy both in Indianapolis and our nation's capital, Washington, D.C.

Will What You Do Really Make A Difference?

- Absolutely! As school board members, you are in an excellent position to educate and influence the legislative process.
- You, like they, are elected officials and hold positions of influence in your community.
- You deal with a variety of issues at the local level on an ongoing basis and are an informed source of information about education policy.
- Legislators listen to their constituents back home. You're on the front lines of education and can explain the impact of state-level policy decisions.
- The impact local school leaders can have in the policy-making process is why the Indiana School Boards Association strongly encourages our members to deliver advocacy messages to the legislature.
- ISBA has established a grassroots program, the Legislative Action Network, to keep local school leaders informed and ready to advocate.

“Top 5” Action Checklist

1. Get Informed

My State Senator:

My State Representative:

2. Contact Your Legislators

➤ Contacted During Interim:

(Date) _____ (Phone/E-Mail/
Letter/In Person)

(Date) _____ (Phone/E-Mail/
Letter/In Person)

(Date) _____ (Phone/E-Mail/
Letter/In Person)

➤ Contacted During Session:

(Date) _____ (Phone/E-Mail/
Letter/In Person)

(Date) _____ (Phone/E-Mail/
Letter/In Person)

(Date) _____ (Phone/E-Mail/
Letter/In Person)

3. Share Information

➤ Action (Date & Description)

➤ Action (Date & Description)

4. Invite & Involve

- Action (Date & Description)

- Action (Date & Description)

5. Come to Indianapolis

- Trips to Indianapolis (Date & Description)

Follow Up with ISBA

Let the ISBA Legislative team know about your conversations with legislators and what responses you receive at: tspradlin@isba-ind.org.

Know Your Elected Officials

You can find contact information for your legislators on the ISBA website at: www.isba-ind.org. Look under the tab: Services/Legislative Services/How to Find Your Legislator.

You can also find this information directly at: www.iga.in.gov. Then click on “Information” and then select “Find Your Legislator.”

➤ Your Senator

Name_____

District Number_____

Address_____

Local Phone_____

State House Phone_____

Email_____

➤ Your Representative

Name_____

District Number_____

Address_____

Local Phone_____

State House Phone_____

Email_____

Get Informed

The first step in effective advocacy is to get informed. It is important that you, as an advocate, understand the issues and are comfortable with your knowledge of them. For ease of access, the ISBA 2022 Legislative Priorities and Foundational Statements are in Appendix A of this guide.

Thorough preparation will make you a more confident and successful advocate. There are many resources available to help you build your knowledge base. A starting point can be the Legislative Services page of the ISBA website (www.isba-ind.org), where you will find a wealth of information:

- ISBA's Legislative Positions & Priorities
- Bill tracking list of K-12 legislation
- Weekly legislative updates
- How a bill becomes law

The Indiana General Assembly's website (www.iga.in.gov) also provides valuable information:

- Watch legislative hearings and floor action live (or archived)
- Find votes on bills
- Review bill amendments
- Access the session calendar and deadlines
- Research the fiscal impact statements on bills

Contact Your Legislators

By regularly contacting your legislators and developing a relationship with them, you will be able to assist them in making well-informed decisions regarding education. You can use e-mail, write letters, or make telephone calls. Contact your legislators prior to the legislative session to introduce yourself and begin to develop a relationship.

When you call during the interim:

- Give your name, title and the name of the school board on which you serve.
- Don't be surprised if you have to schedule a time to speak with the legislator; remember, most legislators have full-time jobs during the interim.
- Focus your conversation on one or two top priorities, remembering that your immediate goal is to introduce yourself and offer yourself as a resource for the legislator on education issues.
- Share stories about the successes of your school corporation.
- Share the "local perspective" on the impact of state legislation.

When you call during the legislative session:

- Ask to speak with the senator or representative, but be prepared to discuss your issue with a legislative assistant.
- Give your name, title and the name of the school board on which you serve.
- Focus your call on ONE issue or bill and, if possible, identify the bill by number; briefly state what position you want the legislator to take and be prepared to offer your rationale based on local impact.
- Always ask what position your legislator will be taking on the bill or issue.
- Share with the ISBA staff what you learned about legislators' positions on issues.

If wanting to call the State House to leave a request for your state representative or senator to vote for or against a bill, you can call the State House call center:

- House of Representatives: 800-382-9842
- Indiana Senate: 800-382-9467

Share Your Story and Information

The next step in effective advocacy is to share the information you have gained with your board, your neighbors and your community. No one is more qualified than you to talk about your school corporation and what is going on within it.

- Formalize legislative advocacy on your board by creating a standing agenda item for legislative updates during the session. Use this time to update your board and, by extension, your community on issues of legislative importance. Report on your contacts with legislators.
- Work with other local elected officials on common issues.
- Ask to speak to civic and community groups on issues of importance to education. As a school board member, you are a community leader and you can have great influence on your community's attitudes.
- Use local media to advocate for public education. Talk to the local newspaper's education reporter to help her or him understand what is happening in your school corporation and with educational programs and services in general. Meet with the editorial board to share a vision of the vital role public education plays in your community. Strong relationships with local media representatives

mean they know they can rely on you as a resource for education stories.

- Finally, write a guest opinion editorial for the newspaper to convey your message to a broader audience.

Invite and Involve the Community

One effective local activity is arranging opportunities for your school to be highlighted as the center of your community. It is important that we continue to introduce ourselves to our public, including our legislative leaders.

- Invite your legislators and members of the public to visit your schools or to events that highlight successful programs in your district. Arrange for legislators to tour one or more schools to showcase your district's achievements and successes. Be sure to call or e-mail media representatives in advance and promptly thank your legislators for coming to the school.
- Host legislative forums in your community or with other school corporations in your county. Invite all of your senators and representatives to a discussion about K-12 education policy and school funding. During the session Thursday evenings, or Friday or Saturday mornings would work best for when they are back home in their districts.
- One of the hardest activities -- but potentially the most effective, is building and activating a local coalition focused on public education. You can form a coalition with stakeholder groups in your community. By engaging these stakeholders in the process you will build understanding and goodwill.

Come to Indianapolis

Culminate your advocacy efforts and help ensure a successful legislative session for issues affecting public education, by visiting Indianapolis and meeting with your legislators.

ISBA will also inform you of opportunities to lend your voice and local expertise to testify on bills in the House and Senate Education Committees. Stay tuned for email blasts in this regard from ISBA during the 2022 session.

Attend the **Fourth Annual ISBA State House Day** on February 15, 2022. This event typically includes a briefing session, legislative panel, a luncheon, and State House office visits. More information will be sent to you about this as it is available.

If you cannot attend this event, schedule another time for board members and administration to travel to Indianapolis to meet with your legislators and push for sustained investment in education.

Follow Up with ISBA

Let us know how your conversations go with your legislators!

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“Top 10” Tips of Effective Lobbying

Tip 1

Research your legislators’ backgrounds, committee assignments and voting records on education issues. Their personal biographies can be found on the House and Senate Caucus Pages on Indiana General Assembly website at: www.iga.in.gov Click on House or Senate and then Republican or Democrat to then find the bios on your legislators. Learn whether their children or grandchildren attend your schools, as this will establish common ground for support of public education.

Tip 2

Develop relationships with your legislators by routinely visiting, writing and calling; let them know you are a constituent. Take notes about them to assist you with future conversations with them.

Tip 3

Don’t overdo your lobbying. Be brief and know what you are talking about. Use ISBA talking points. Clearly and quickly explain your opposition or support for the issue you are contacting them about.

Tip 4

Show respect. Be positive. Remember to thank legislators for pro-public education votes and support of the ISBA legislative priorities. Conclude each communication with an expression of gratitude for their time.

Tip 5

Lobby with your real-life experience. It's your most persuasive tool; use local examples.

Tip 6

Set priorities. When everything is important, nothing is important. Know your 'ask' and focus your conversation around it.

Tip 7

Shore up lobbying allies from your community to demonstrate broad support; collaborate with others.

Tip 8

Don't forget the media. Getting your message out to the press – letters-to-the editor, news releases, etc. – can influence your legislators and public opinion.

Tip 9

Be sensitive to partisan politics, but always try to come across as nonpartisan. In politics, there are no permanent allies and no permanent adversaries.

Tip 10

Be reasonable and consider compromise on contentious issues. Remember there are typically more than 1,000 bills that are introduced each session and everyone thinks their issues are most important —so many people and issues vie for the attention of legislators. Sometimes, simply informing legislators on your position will pay long-term dividends whether you immediately change their position or not.

A Checklist of Quick Communication Tips

- ✓ When calling, ask to speak with the legislator directly, or briefly state your position to the person taking the message.
- ✓ Know local needs and impact of legislation on your school district.
- ✓ Speak up; be heard on issues of concern to you. Your actions and inactions count.
- ✓ Know your issues. Check ISBA's bill tracking list and weekly legislative updates on a frequent basis during the session to keep abreast of legislative news.
- ✓ Follow through with any information promised.
- ✓ Be honest in your approach.
- ✓ Identify and utilize common interest/ issues/activities.
- ✓ Your knowledge of issues and the legislative process produces credibility with your legislator; your credibility dictates your legislator's level of response.
- ✓ Be direct.
 - Make specific requests.
 - Get specific commitments.
 - Follow up: Hold a legislator accountable for his/her commitments.
- ✓ Make yourself a contact point for your legislator within your district.

Writing Letters-to-the-Editor and Opinion Editorials

Letters-to-the-editor and opinion editorials written by readers (called op-eds) are useful ways to speak out on an issue, respond to an article or editorial, or express your position in your own words. They often are read by members of the Indiana General Assembly and can do double-time as a lobbying tool, as they influence the broader community, too, to build support for pro-K-12 education legislation. Concentrate on writing letters-to-the-editor or op-eds for your local newspaper since that will have the greatest impact on legislators. Even a letter or op-ed that does not get published is valuable because it may be considered by a newspaper's editorial board reviewing an issue and it may cause the paper to write a story on the topic.

Hints for effective letters-to-the-editor and op-eds:

- Be brief and focus on one issue. If the article is too long, the newspaper may edit out some important facts. To get an idea of how long is too long, take a look at your newspaper's opinions page and count the words in an average letter-to-the-editor. The average op-ed is usually longer than a letter-to-the-editor and is between 450 and 500 words.
- For a letter-to-the-editor, refer to a recent event or an article, which has appeared in the

newspaper and include the article's date and title.

- When applicable, close your letter or op-ed by asking readers to contact their members of the General Assembly or other policymakers about the issue.
- Give your address, school district and phone number so that the newspaper can verify authorship.
- Send your published letter-to-the-editor or op-ed to your legislators.

State Offices

Indiana State Governor

Eric Holcomb

State House

200 W. Washington Street, Room 206

Indianapolis, IN 46204

Lieutenant Governor of Indiana

Suzanne Crouch

State House

200 W. Washington Street, Room 333

Indianapolis, IN 46204

Secretary of State of Indiana

Holli Sullivan

State House

200 W. Washington Street, Room 201

Indianapolis, IN 46204

Indiana Attorney General

Todd Rokita

Indiana Government Center South

302 W. Washington St., 5th Floor

Indianapolis, IN 46204

Secretary of Education

Dr. Katie Jenner

Indiana Government Center North, 9th Floor
100 N Senate Ave
Indianapolis, IN 46204

The Honorable (insert name of State Representative)

State Representative, District (insert number)
Indiana House of Representatives
State House
200 W. Washington Street.
Indianapolis, IN 46204

The salutation of your letter should read, "Dear Representative (insert last name)."

The Honorable (insert name of State Senator)

State Senator, District (insert number)
State House
200 W. Washington Street.
Indianapolis, IN 46204

The salutation of your letter should read, "Dear Senator (insert last name)."

The President

The White House

Washington, D.C. 20500

The salutation of your letter should read, "Dear Mr. or
Madame President."

The Honorable (insert U.S. Senator's name)

Senate Office Building

Washington, D.C. 20515

The salutation of your letter should read, "Dear Senator
(insert last name)."

The Honorable (insert U.S. Representative's name)

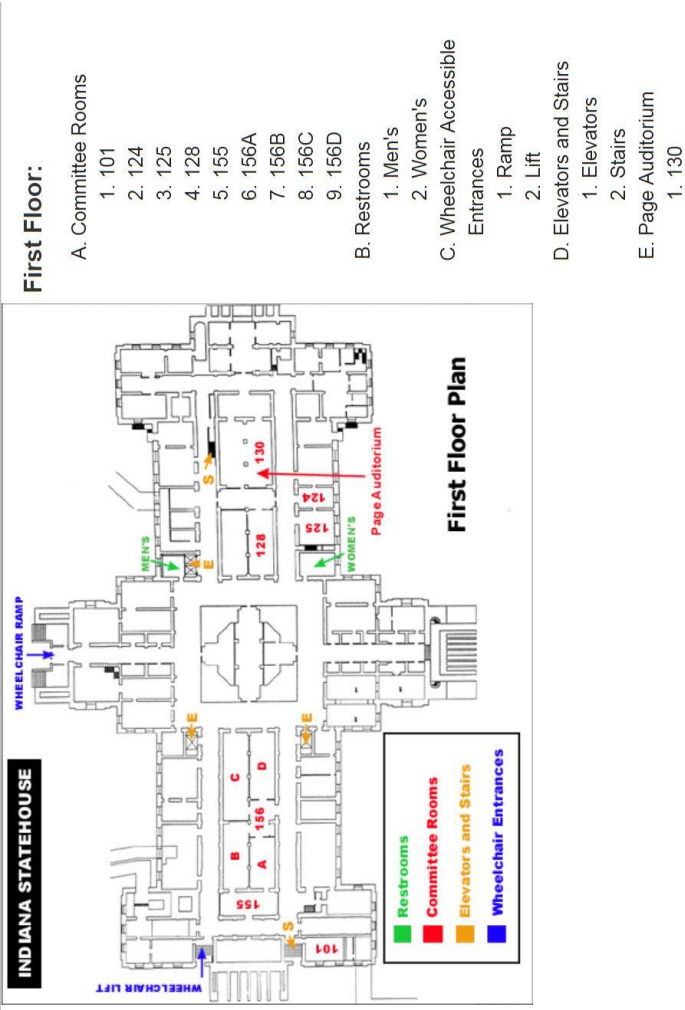
House of Representatives

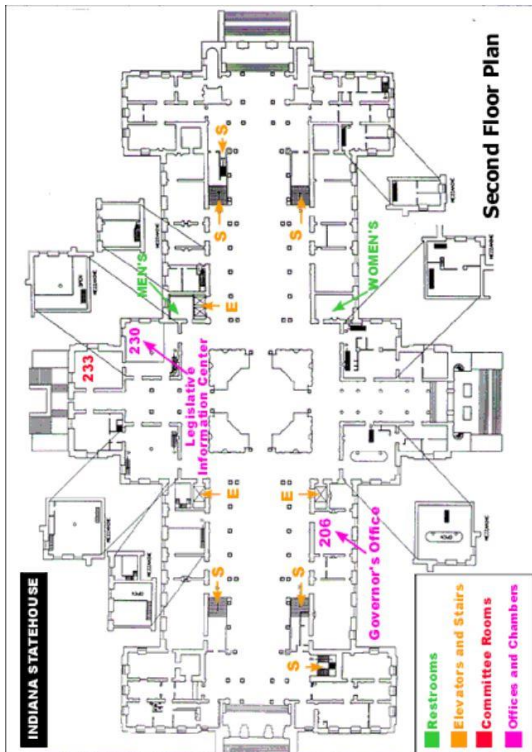
Washington, D.C. 20515

The salutation of your letter should read, "Dear
Congressman/woman (insert last name)."

Map of State House

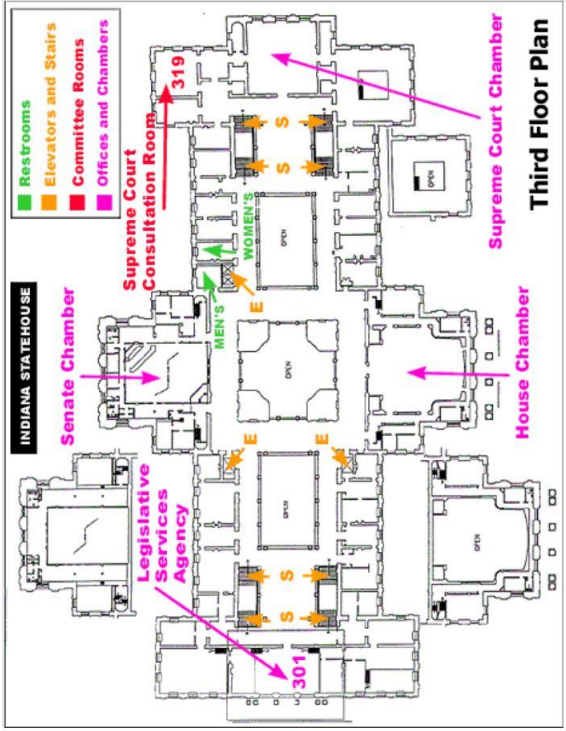
Maps are courtesy of the [Indiana General Assembly](#).





Second Floor:

- A. Committee Rooms
 - 1. 233
- B. Restrooms
 - 1. Men's
 - 2. Women's
- C. Offices and Chambers
 - 1. Governor's Office
 - 2. Legislative Information Center
- D. Elevators and Stairs
 - 1. Elevators
 - 2. Stairs



Third Floor:

- A. Committee Rooms
 - 1. Supreme Court Consultation Room- 319
- B. Restrooms
 - 1. Men's
 - 2. Women's
- C. Offices and Chambers
 - 1. Senate Chamber
 - 2. House Chamber
 - 3. Supreme Court Chamber
 - 4. Legislative Services Agency
- D. Elevators and Stairs
 - 1. Elevators
 - 2. Stairs

INDIANA STATEHOUSE

Legend:

- Restrooms (Green)
- Elevators and Stairs (Orange)
- Committee Rooms (Red)
- Offices and Chambers (Pink)

Rooms and Galleries:

- Senate Gallery
- House Gallery
- Court of Appeals
- Ways and Means
- Senate Finance
- 401B
- 431
- 404
- 413
- WOMEN'S
- MEN'S
- Meditation Room

- ## 2. Stairs

Appendix A

Legislative Priorities and Foundational Statements

2022 Legislative Priorities

1. Supporting the Teaching Profession and Addressing Teacher Shortages

A. Attaining Teacher Pay Goals.

ISBA commends the Indiana General Assembly for the K-12 tuition support increases committed during the 2021 budget session for the current biennium. Nearly \$1 billion in new funding has been dedicated over this two-year period for Education Fund expenditures of school corporations, which are largely dedicated to teacher and certified staff pay and benefits. Included in HEA 1001 were goals and requirements for school corporations to meet concerning teacher pay. One stipulation requires that school corporations spend 45 percent or more of tuition support on pay for teachers who spend at least 50 percent of the school day in the classroom. **ISBA supports legislation to clarify the computation to include all certified staff in the bargaining units, instructional expenses for students enrolled in CTE and/or a special education cooperative, and total teacher compensation, including the cost of benefits, pension contributions, social security, and FICA contributions.**

B. Recruiting and Retaining Teachers.

Use of emergency permits by Indiana school corporations has escalated, underscoring the need for new programs and strategies that address the teacher shortage. Indiana issued 4,496 emergency permits for the 2019-20 school year, a startling 46% increase compared to 2015-16. Special education accounted for 27% (1,218) of the emergency permits issued in 2019-

20, while STEM fields represent three of the top 10 emergency permit areas.

Recruitment and retention strategies supported by ISBA include:

- Compensation for pre-service teachers who participate in teacher residency programs.
- A “Grow Your Own” grant program offering competitive grants to school districts and postsecondary institutions to develop and implement “Grow Your Own” programs aimed at attracting high school students to pursue a career in education
- A scholarship program for paraprofessionals, teachers’ aides, and emergency permit holders that provide \$3,000-\$5,000 toward a teaching degree or add-on in exchange for a two- to three-year service commitment
- Development and expansion of cadet teaching programs at Indiana high schools
- Student loan forgiveness or loan repayment assistance programs targeted to teachers in critical shortage areas

2. Suspending A-F School Accountability Grades and Expediting Move to Data Dashboard System

ISBA supports suspending the current state A-F accountability system and favors an accelerated implementation of a data dashboard system that provides the public with multiple measures, including opportunity gap indicators, beyond test scores for which to judge the quality of all schools that receive state tuition support. Furthermore, ISBA supports the creation of a pilot program during the 2022-2023 school year to allow for a demonstration of the data dashboard and the opportunity to modify and enhance the reporting system before full implementation by the statutory deadline in 2024.

3. Supporting Deregulation Initiatives

With the high volume of K-12 public education laws that are passed each year by the General Assembly (157 new laws in four years), ISBA supports efforts to reduce, streamline, and/or repeal K-12 education laws that are non-essential or obsolete, and/or to provide greater flexibility to schools through expanded waivers or other similar means. While past legislation has suggested deregulation initiatives be studied by interim study committees, ISBA believes that creation of a **Blue Ribbon K-12 Education Deregulation Commission** would help to achieve common deregulation opportunities, cost-savings initiatives, and provide for a structured mechanism for regular review of Title 20 code provisions.

4. Reviewing Local Government Financing Matters

ISBA supports a review of local government finance matters by the legislature to consider eliminating the maximum levy growth quotient (MLGQ) and instead factor in actual annual growth in assessed value while adjusting for circuit breaker tax cap losses. In addition, ISBA would support eliminating Controlled Project thresholds to move to a maximum referendum property tax rate mechanism. In addition, ISBA supports continued analysis of the financial impact of TIF districts on other units of government.

5. Examining Referendum Issues

A. Clarifying Referendum Tax Rate Information

HEA 1271 (Public Law 38-2021) revises the local public question for Controlled Projects, Operations, and school safety referenda of school corporations to include the “estimated average percentage of property tax increase” on residential and business property. This new language replaced the prior long-standing language that provided the proposed property tax rate increase per \$100 assessed valuation to the property taxpayer. This new language is considered ambiguous and could misinform a taxpayer that would pay significantly less, or more, than the average percentage of property tax increase. ISBA supports reverting back to the prior language with the requirement that the school corporation or the Department of Local Government Finance publish an impact report with an online calculator for taxpayers to understand the direct impact of the referendum.

B. Adding Capital Referendum (Controlled Project) Net Tax Rate Ballot Language

ISBA proposes allowing school corporations to adjust the “estimated average percentage of property tax increase” included in the ballot question to a net average on a resident and business after deducting any retirement of debt scheduled during the lifespan of an approved referendum. Due to the cost of the project, the net tax rate impact is an additional piece of information needed so that taxpayers/voters can understand the long-term cost impact to them. Inclusion of this information on the ballot will provide a more accurate depiction of the tax rates and levies of the school corporation.

2022 Legislative Foundational Statements

The Indiana School Boards Association (ISBA) is dedicated to improving the quality of education provided by public schools throughout the state of Indiana. ISBA recognizes the role of the General Assembly in enacting legislation that impacts public education and is committed to representing the interests of its member school corporations when addressing legislative initiatives. ISBA has adopted the following foundational statements to formalize its position as it advocates on behalf of Indiana school boards and public education on present and future legislation.

Support Exceptional Learning Opportunities for Hoosier Children

The ISBA supports programs and policies to provide exceptional learning opportunities for Hoosier children. Given that more than 94 percent of all K-12 students attend a public school, the parents of more than 1 million students have spoken and have made public schools the “schools of choice.” We believe that through local control, we have created a rich and diverse public education system that provides a multitude of learning environments, programs, and curricular offerings to students. Through these opportunities we are preparing a new generation of students to be college and career ready that will in turn help drive the economic growth and prosperity of the state.

Promote Equitable Funding of Public Schools

The ISBA supports the funding of public schools that is annually adjusted to keep ahead of inflation and that improves Indiana's ranking on per pupil funding. This will allow local boards of education to support the ongoing improvement in the quality of public education. ISBA supports the equitable funding of public schools, recognizing that schools may need additional funding to educate economically-disadvantaged students.

Empower School Board Authority

The ISBA supports empowering local boards of education with the authority to govern the educational and financial matters, including health and safety measures for students and employees, of individual public school corporations.

Maintain Nonpartisan School Boards and Local Control of Reorganization Plans

The ISBA supports continuation of the election and/or appointment of school board members on a nonpartisan basis. School board elections should be based on local educational needs and solutions, not political affiliation. Candidates should be elected for their qualifications and their commitment to student success, without regard to political party allegiance.

The ISBA supports limiting the authority to make changes to local reorganization plans, including consolidation and disannexation of school corporations, to school boards and the voters who reside within the particular public school corporations affected and does

not support the General Assembly enacting legislation that mandates such changes.

Maintain Safe & Secure Learning Environments

The ISBA supports local control—with state support, broad policy, and appropriate funding—to implement comprehensive strategies of a school safety plan that are developed with insights of a threat assessment and in collaboration with local law enforcement and public safety agencies. ISBA opposes funded or unfunded mandates for implementation of specific school safety equipment, devices, or technology. Policies and funding pertaining to school safety should be holistic and include addressing the social and emotional needs of students and staff, including resources for guidance counselors, social workers, and mental health therapists to support student and staff wellness.

Promote High-Quality Teachers and School Leaders

The ISBA believes that effective educational achievement outcomes depend on a high-quality teacher and administrator workforce. We support legislation that respects and values the teaching profession as an honorable, noble profession. We support state policies and laws that enable “teachers to teach” without burdensome regulation or policies that diminish or demean the profession (e.g., licensure policies that do not require pedagogy training and knowledge). ISBA seeks support for teacher recruitment strategies that both address critical shortage areas and attract a pipeline of diverse teacher candidates into the classroom, such as promising “Grow Your Own” partnerships between schools and postsecondary institutions. ISBA is a proponent of initiatives that improve the retention of excellent educators, including

enhanced support for mentoring and leadership development.

Support Professional Development

The ISBA supports professional development opportunities that provide evaluation, training, and mentoring that enhance and elevate the teaching profession. We support state funding for professional development and in-service programs that may be conducted beyond the 180-day school year. ISBA also supports enhanced teacher training on e-learning instruction strategies that reflect best practice and proven methodologies to engage students in a virtual environment.

Protect School Calendar/Instructional Time

The ISBA supports the current legislative mandate to conduct a minimum of 180 student instructional days and believes the local governing body should retain the authority to determine the school calendar.

The ISBA supports the current flexibility to adjust the beginning and closing hour of the school day due to student safety concerns.

The ISBA supports the current legislative mandate to conduct a minimum of student instructional time and believes the local board of education should retain the authority to determine the best method for meeting the instructional day requirements. The ISBA supports the current flexibility to use virtual instruction when deemed appropriate by local school officials.

Seek Rigorous Financial and Academic Accountability Measures for All Schools

The metrics used to grade school corporations and individual schools should be transparent and easy to understand. ISBA supports the use of multiple measures to judge the quality of schools to reduce the over-reliance on summative assessment scores.

Regardless of which metrics are used for the school accountability system, all schools (public and private) receiving state tuition support dollars should adhere to the same academic and financial accountability metrics. The public has a right to expect transparency and compliance with the public notice requirements, record keeping and audits needed for financial accountability, and access to public records from all state-funded schools. Dollars flowing to each school system type should be itemized separately in the state budget. Taxpayers deserve full transparency on the level of their tax dollars being spent on these programs.

ISBA recognizes and commends the efforts of public schools to fulfill the unique constitutional duty to educate every child. The ISBA supports requiring all schools that receive state tuition support funding to admit students on a nondiscriminatory basis.

Expand K-12 Tax Credit Programs

The ISBA supports expansion of the tax credit laws that fund school scholarships for enrollment in private schools to include an income tax credit for charitable contributions to public education foundations. In addition, ISBA supports a tax deduction for parents of

public school students for educational expenses, including curricular material fees.

Support Career and Technical Education (CTE)

ISBA believes career and technical education (CTE) should enable and empower students to move directly into employment upon graduation and/or complete a postsecondary credential more quickly. All students should have the opportunity to engage in career exploration. Secondary CTE courses should expand focus from filling short-term needs of business and industry that are entry-level and low-wage basic jobs to creating career pathways that lead to transferable skills and certifications to foster life-long learning. Policymakers and state agency leaders should support fiscal and administrative policies to incentivize cooperation between school corporations and employers, as well as to help with the purchase of new equipment.

Notes

Notes

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