



PHILADELPHIA

FEDERATION of TEACHERS

TO: MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
CC: GOVERNOR TOM WOLF
SECRETARY OF EDUCATION PEDRO RIVERA
FROM: JERRY JORDAN, PRESIDENT, PHILADELPHIA FEDERATION OF TEACHERS
RE: BUDGET NEGOTIATIONS SUMMARY DOCUMENT
JUNE 24, 2019

As budget negotiations continue, I wanted to ensure that our priorities remain clear. The memo below outlines a number of critical issues facing Philadelphia's educators and schoolchildren.

Facilities Funding (SB555 & SB556)

Significant facilities funding must be a part of any final budget package.

In Philadelphia's schools alone, more than 88,000 students attend school in a building deemed, by their FCI (Facilities Condition Index) to be in "poor" or "critical" condition. More than 110,000 students enter buildings with the presence of lead and asbestos. In 142 schools, representing more than 88,000 students, mold has presented an environmental hazard. Rodents and other pest issues are pervasive. Schools are cold in the winter and hot in warm months. The conditions in which we expect our children to learn and our educators to work are untenable and immoral. In fact, school districts across the Commonwealth are home to old school buildings in desperate need of repair.

The PFT convened the "Fund Our Facilities" coalition to bring increased awareness and action to this issue. Together with more than 20 elected officials, community organizations, and labor leaders from local and state levels, we are working hard to not only elevate the critical importance of school facility infrastructure, but also to make real progress towards ensuring the safety of our schoolchildren.

Introduced by founding coalition member Senator Hughes, the School Emergency Repair Program would help address immediate health and safety concerns in schools across the commonwealth. The \$85 million dollars dedicated to Philadelphia's schools in Senator Hughes' companion bills (SB555 & SB556) represent exactly half of the \$170 million our coalition has called for in order to secure safe, healthy, and clean schools for all of our children and educators.

Further, the PFT is in full support of Senator Browne's bipartisan SB700. Since the completion of the PLANCON commission report last year, the program has gone unfunded, and we urge the adoption of this bipartisan bill. SB700 would provide for sustainable funding by implementing recommendations and establish a much-needed facilities grant program. However, this bill, without funding, will be insufficient.

Both the School Emergency Repair Program and PLANCON legislative measures are needed. Our children need, deserve, and are constitutionally entitled to a "thorough and efficient" public education. And that starts with making sure their places of learning are not poisoning them every day.

Teacher Evaluation (As written in SB751)

While the process behind this legislation was extraordinarily flawed, our concerns regarding SB751 are not merely process based. The concerns outlined in our previous communications remain.

For a significant number of educators, the legislation proposed in SB751 does not sufficiently move the needle on teacher evaluations

The PFT recommends the following amendments:

- *The elimination of the building level data as a multiple measures metric used to evaluate teachers.* We would support a further increase in the teacher observation being utilized as an evaluative metric.
- *Moving the "challenge multiplier" component to a regulatory statute that is yet to be developed.* We have no data outlining how the metric would or would not affect individual teacher observations.
- *The restoration of the teacher specific data being driven by a teacher-controlled metric such as the SLO.* SB751 appears to remove teacher agency and professionalism.
- *Charter school educators must be subject to the same evaluation system.*

Our concerns are not limited to the above issues, but for the purposes of succinctly suggesting amendments, these recommendations are a good place to start. We will continue to advocate for this legislation to be held to ensure that these amendments and others are able to be adequately considered.

Charter Expansion (HB357&HB356)

HB357

- This legislation is another attempt to circumvent local control and autonomy, to promote unfettered charter growth, and to further siphon funding from public education.

- The financial impacts of HB357 would be massive, and this legislation has the potential to completely obliterate the public education system in Philadelphia and municipalities across the Commonwealth.
- **In Philadelphia alone, over the next 5 years, HB357 would have a cumulative impact of anywhere from \$150 Million to \$350 Million.**
 - The elimination of local autonomy regarding the application process has the effect of incentivizing charters to refuse to execute signed agreements. To allow for this unfettered growth would be catastrophic for public school districts, particularly in areas where unchecked charter growth has caused enormous fiscal impact already.

HB 356

Again, HB356 sets the stage for further charter expansion, and moves us further away from Pennsylvania's constitutional and moral obligation to provide every child with a "thorough and efficient" system of public education.

Despite amendments, our concerns remain that HB356 would encourage school closures, charter chain expansion, and unfettered growth.

Voucher Expansion (via School Code or other vehicle)

We applaud Governor Wolf's veto of voucher expansion (HB800). Our opposition to any and all expansion of EITC/vouchers remains steadfast. At no point should the expansion of vouchers be utilized as a bargaining chip in budget negotiations. Budgets are a perennial reminder of our priorities. An expansion of EITC in any amount is a blow to the public school students we serve every day.

Pennsylvania is one of just nine states where one can actually earn a profit by investing in EITC programming. It is an untenable program that, under years of continued growth, has further siphoned money from our public schools. I urge you to continue to reject any expansion of EITC.

For a comprehensive look at our legislative issues, please visit our previously circulated memos at pft.org/pft-legislative-memos

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