



PHILADELPHIA *FEDERATION of TEACHERS*

TO: MEMBERS OF THE PENNSYLVANIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

FROM: JERRY T. JORDAN, PRESIDENT, PHILADELPHIA FEDERATION OF TEACHERS

**RE: SUPPORT FOR FACILITIES INVESTMENT (SB700, SB555, SB556); SUPPORT FOR
TRAUMA INFORMED EDUCATION (SB200); BUDGET NEGOTIATIONS**

JUNE 4, 2019

SUPPORT: FACILITIES INVESTMENTS (SB700, SB555, SB556)

The facilities crisis in schools across the Commonwealth is urgent. The legislature must act now to implement commonsense solutions to address the emergency facing so many of our students and educators.

In Philadelphia's schools alone, more than 88,000 students attend school in a building deemed to be in "poor" or "critical" condition, as indicated by a scientific FCI measure. 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 blazing hot in warm months. The conditions in which we expect our children to learn and our educators to work are untenable and immoral.

The PFT convened the "Fund Our Facilities" coalition to bring increased awareness and action to this issue. We are pleased to offer our full support of three critical pieces of legislation that would provide funding for facilities investments.

✓ SB555 & SB556: School Emergency Repair Program

The School Emergency Repair Program would help address immediate health and safety concerns in schools across the commonwealth. The \$85 million dollar amount dedicated to Philadelphia's schools in Senator Hughes' companion bills (**SB 555 and SB 556**) 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.

Funding for SB 555 would come in the form of a \$125 million grant from several Commonwealth special funds with outstanding balances. SB 556 is an alternative proposal that would secure the \$125 million from the current state budget surplus. With each bill, Hughes proposes directing \$85 million to the School District of Philadelphia; \$30 million to 134 school districts throughout the state with a significant number of students experiencing poverty; and \$10 million to the remaining public schools in the state.

This emergency funding will make a real difference in the lives of our students and educators. The implementation of the School Emergency Repair Program must be of utmost priority for the legislature.

✓ SB700: PLANCON

We are pleased that the legislature is proposing real investment into its school construction and maintenance initiative. 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 as well as establishing a much-needed facilities grant program.

To be clear, **both the School Emergency Repair Program and PLANCON legislative measures are needed.** Our children need, deserve, and indeed 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. ***The PFT urges the general assembly to implement Senator Hughes' School Emergency Repair Program and Senator Browne's PLANCON legislation.***

SUPPORT: TRAUMA INFORMED EDUCATION (SB200)

✓ SB200: TRAUMA INFORMED EDUCATION

SB200 provides an important opportunity for additional resources and services for our students. For too long, children and educators have been expected to do more with less. To navigate more trauma with less support and intervention. To overcome poverty without concrete support services to ensure sustained investment in our students and communities.

In order to ensure that every child has the opportunity to thrive, it is incumbent upon us to recognize—and address—the very real trauma that many of our students endure or have endured at some point in their lives. It is encouraging that the legislature is thinking holistically about our children and considering what supports they need to succeed.

Trauma informed education works. Our educators and students benefit from increased awareness and intervention. SB200 is a worthwhile place to start in order to begin to address many of the adverse effects of trauma.

VOUCHER AND CHARTER EXPANSION

Any EITC expansion or charter school expansion legislation must not be utilized as a bargaining chip in budget negotiations. The PFT stands in strong opposition to the expansion of EITC (HB800) and charter expansion (HB356&357).

We have shared numerous memos outlining our opposition to voucher and charter expansion.

✗ EITC expansion (HB800)

<https://pft.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/EITC-Memo-April2019.pdf>

✗ Charter expansion (HB356&HB357)

<https://pft.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/JJ-Memo-HB356-HB357-FINAL.pdf>

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