



PHILADELPHIA

FEDERATION of TEACHERS

TO: MEMBERS OF THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE LEGISLATURE
CC: GOVERNOR TOM WOLF
FROM: JERRY T. JORDAN, PRESIDENT, PHILADELPHIA FEDERATION OF TEACHERS
RE: PFT LEGISLATIVE POSITIONS
JUNE 28, 2017

As I previously shared in my February letter to legislators, we are in support of the Governor's proposed \$100M increase in basic education funding and \$25M increase in special education funding; and implementing a shale tax and other corporate taxes that will begin to alleviate the tremendous burden borne by Pennsylvania's children.

Additionally, PFT has taken the following legislative positions, many of which we have shared with you throughout the budget process:

Bills having passed the Senate; and currently in House committee

➤ *SB 166: Paycheck Deception [OPPOSED]*

- This is anti-worker legislation, plain and simple.
- Union membership is voluntary in Pennsylvania, and the collection of dues is negotiated.
- There is no financial gain to restricting this practice, and it would be detrimental to the working men and women who rely on collective bargaining for a fair salary and working conditions.
- The notion that union members are required to contribute to the union is unequivocally false. Membership and political contributions are two entirely different deductions, and both must be signed up for independently. We are vehemently opposed to SB 166 and any legislation that seeks to silence workers.

Bills having passed the House; and currently in Senate committee

➤ *HB 97: Charter "Reform" [OPPOSED]*

- House Bill 97 fails to address critical funding problems with the current law. Instead, it establishes a new funding advisory commission that in effect ignores that very significant funding discrepancies and inequities that exist between charter and traditional public schools. The advisory board is tasked with potentially creating a state-wide charter authorization board—another way of circumventing local control and enabling charter companies to expand their reach.
- House Bill 97 does not address issues of education quality in charter schools, or allow school districts to hold charters accountable if they fail to provide students with a quality education. The bill does not address cyber charter school quality; and it incorporates separate standards that will allow charter schools to play by different rules than district schools.
- House Bill 97 does nothing to ensure that charters will equitably serve all students and does not address student "push out" in charters. It fails to ensure charters will equitably serve the

most vulnerable students in their communities, including those who are experiencing homelessness, living in foster care, and returning from juvenile justice placement.

➤ **HB 250: EITC Expansion [OPPOSED]**

- These funds only further augment inequity in schools by utilizing lucrative tax breaks as a means of funneling money into private and religious schools.
- Rather than investing in our traditional public schools which are accessible to all children, increased government funding for private schools simply seeks to circumvent our collective responsibility to provide fair and adequate public education to all of our children.

➤ **HB 857: Amends Private Academic Schools Act [OPPOSED]**

- Further deregulating private schools is an alarming proposition, and will not benefit students and families across the Commonwealth.
- Private, religious, and charter schools already exist on a different playing field than traditional public schools.
- Actively working to further deregulate private schools would be another blow to underfunded public schools

➤ **HB 438, 991, 975, 1075: Liquor Privatization [OPPOSED]**

- *From our brothers and sisters at the AFL-CIO, here's a good summary of why we oppose these bills:*
- Thousands of good, union jobs would be eliminated --Privatization will eliminate over 5,000 good union jobs with benefits and pensions. It represents a direct attack on organized labor and on working Pennsylvanians.
- Devastating cuts to the state budget -- The PLCB is a public resource that adds over \$500 million a year to our state coffers. Especially with the state in a \$2-3 billion budget shortfall, jeopardizing one of our most reliable sources of revenue is a terrible idea.
- Hurting public safety -- According to the Centers for Disease Control, Pennsylvania has the best record in the country of preventing alcohol sales to minors.

Bills having been referred to committee in the Senate

➤ **SB 555: Fair Share Tax Plan [SUPPORT]**

From Penn Budget and Policy Center: The Fair Share Tax... would take a major step toward fixing Pennsylvania's broken tax system and raise the revenues we need to invest in the public goods that are critical to creating thriving communities and individual opportunity in our state: education, infrastructure, protection for our air and water, and human services.

[<http://www.pennbpc.org/fair-share-tax-support-public-investment-pennsylvania>]

➤ **Pending Introduction--SB 777: Tax on the Marcellus Shale [SUPPORT]**

- As we have stated for years, implementing a tax on the Marcellus Shale is common sense.
- Taxing an extraordinarily profitable industry that has benefitted from our State's resources for decades is a first step towards leveling the playing field.
- It is outrageous that this booming industry exists tax free in Pennsylvania while schools are underfunded and in great need of resources.

- As indicated by a recent IFO report, this modest shale tax would generate \$712M in 2018-19 alone, and is a fiscally stable source of revenue.
- A 5% tax would enable an \$8 Billion bond that could be driven out using the fair funding formula.

➤ **SB 76: Elimination of property taxes [OPPOSED]**

- This is an extremely dangerous piece of legislation, as it puts in immediate danger school funding across the state, in all locales.
- We encourage legislators to utilize alternative, less fiscally careless, methods of property tax relief.

➤ **SB 228: Economic furlough [OPPOSED]**

- Again, this is an ill-advised attempt at circumventing best practices in education and investing in our schools.
- Adding “economic reasons” while simultaneously adding criteria based on extremely flawed evaluation methods is certainly not a legitimate way to impose austere furloughs.
- This legislation skirts the true issue of fully funding schools across the Commonwealth.

Bills having been referred to committee in the House

➤ **HB 1495: Layoff modifications**

- This bill permits layoffs not based on seniority but on the economic conditions in a district, and it **prohibits** public school districts and any union representing their professional employees from bargaining over or agreeing to a different system.
- This effectively amends Act 195 for public school teachers, and would prevent unions and districts from discussing layoffs when bargaining new contracts.
- When layoffs happen, union protections are essential.
- This bill again circumvents the true issues of funding inequity in our schools and seeks to once again malign educators.

➤ **HB 164: Union Leave Prohibition [OPPOSED]**

- This nonsensical legislation is based on the false premise that educators on union leave are out of the classroom at the expense of children and taxpayers.
- Educators on union leave is part of our negotiated collective bargaining agreement, and comes at zero expense to the School District or taxpayers.
- While on leave, union employees’ compensation (salary and benefits) is 100% reimbursed to the District.

Bills out of committee and before the full Senate

➤ **SB 168: Open Bargaining [OPPOSED]**

- This bill is another attempt at breaking unions under the guise of “sunshine.”
- Instead of continuing to find ways of disrupting the sanctity of collective bargaining for the common good, this bill looks to upend the process and implement mechanisms that would be detrimental to the working people of Pennsylvania.

➤ **SB 383: Guns in Schools [OPPOSED]**

- There is no evidence that bringing guns into schools increases student safety, regardless of the amount of training given to teachers and school staff. There is, however, research that shows that children are far more likely to suffer self-inflicted injuries from firearms.
- Numerous studies of school climate show that the best way to make our schools safe is by providing children with adequate staff, programs and services--NOT GUNS!
- We must focus on bringing more funding and resources to public schools, not weapons.

Bills out of committee and before the full House

- N/A

Tabled legislation

➤ **SB 229: Elimination of guaranteed sick leave for educators [OPPOSED]**

- This legislation eliminates paid sick leave and sabbatical leave requirements that are critical to the stability of the education workforce.
- Passing this bill will make it harder to recruit and retain educators in Pennsylvania.
- This legislation would be another attempt to once again unfairly target and scapegoat educators.

➤ **SB 167: Paycheck Deception [OPPOSED]**

- This is another piece anti-worker legislation, plain and simple. Our opposition to it is for the same reasons as outlined for SB 166.

SUMMARY:

Bill/Legislative Item	PFT Position
Governor's \$100M increase in basic education funding	SUPPORT
Governor's \$100M increase in special education funding	SUPPORT
SB 76 [Elimination of property taxes]	OPPOSED
SB 166 [Paycheck deception]	OPPOSED
SB 167 [Paycheck deception]	OPPOSED
SB 168 [Open bargaining]	OPPOSED
SB 228 [Economic furlough]	OPPOSED
SB 229 [Elimination of guaranteed sick leave for educators]	OPPOSED
SB 383 [Guns in schools]	OPPOSED
SB 555 [Fair share tax plan]	SUPPORT
SB 777 [Shale tax; pending introduction]	SUPPORT
HB 97 [Charter 'reform']	OPPOSED
HB 164 [Prohibition of union leave]	OPPOSED
HB 250 [EITC expansion]	OPPOSED
HB 438 [Liquor privatization]	OPPOSED
HB 857 [Amends private academic schools out]	OPPOSED
HB 991 [Liquor privatization]	OPPOSED
HB 975 [Liquor privatization]	OPPOSED
HB 1075 [Liquor privatization]	OPPOSED
HB 1495 [Layoffs]	OPPOSED

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