

Maryland PTA Legislative Agenda 2014



Maryland PTA's Mission is to serve as a powerful voice for all children; as a resource for families and communities and as a strong advocate for the education and well-being of every child.

"To make every child's potential a reality by engaging and empowering families and communities to advocate for all children."



President's Message

everychild.onevoice. Maryland PTA believes in strong advocacy for every child, whether by birth or otherwise, they are all our children. Our children need effective advocates for their well-being and academic success. They need caring adults who will work tirelessly on their behalf in schools, communities, at the State House and on Capitol Hill. Our children need PTA and we embrace the motto, *everychild.onevoice*. It is this passion that drives us to want to improve schools and communities around the state. Our children need effective advocates for their well-being and academic success.

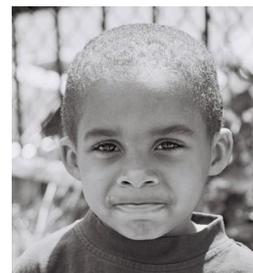
The Maryland PTA Legislative Agenda is part of the Mission and Purpose of PTA to deliver a powerful voice for all children in Maryland. It takes many hands to advocate for all children. Maryland PTA stands ready to do our part and we encourage you to join our advocacy efforts in 2014.

Ray Leone, President, Maryland PTA

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Legislative Agenda's Purpose

To establish the authority, direction and priority for action on public policy. The Maryland PTA Board of Directors annually approves the Legislative Agenda, which establishes the authority to address issues on behalf of all Maryland PTA members. All directives are developed from State and National resolutions, position statements, or policy statements. Maryland PTA works to secure adequate laws for the care and protection of children and youth. Maryland PTA's Legislative Objective is to advocate for parental and community involvement in public schools and to enhance the education, health and welfare for all children.



Maryland PTA works to secure adequate laws for the care and protection of children and youth.

Maryland PTA Legislative Agenda 2014

Next year Maryland PTA will celebrate 100 years of advocating for all children. Since our inception, Maryland PTA has dedicated its efforts to bolster our founding principles, family engagement in education from birth through high school graduation; education for every child regardless of socioeconomic background; worked to address childhood health; work against unfair and punitive treatment of education in the justice system and worked to help all children achieve success through quality public education. With nearly 200,000 members, Maryland PTA will continue to protect the education, health, and overall well-being by advocating for educational opportunity and equity for all children.

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State Legislative Focus

Parent, Family, and Community Involvement – Maryland PTA initiatives include accessible, equitable opportunities for meaningful involvement of parents/guardians, business and community stakeholders in development and review of public policies, educational standards, graduation requirements, and environmental and health standards.

Quality and Equitable Public Education—Maryland PTA supports

- Public education funding to support the needs of public schools to initiate or continue to offer high quality educational services to children from early childhood through high school graduation.
- Additional funding to local jurisdictions to correct past inequities in the funding of public education until such time that all jurisdictions have adequate financial resources to meet the needs of all students. While movement in this direction began in the early 2000s, it is yet to be fully achieved. Efforts to fulfill this goal must be redoubled.
- Public funding to adequately and equitably ensure high quality educational services for all special populations including Physical, Intellectual, and Emotional Disabilities, Gifted and Talented, English Language Learners, economic poverty, and other special needs.
- A high quality education for the whole child, to include music, the arts, physical education, and the eight federally mandated core subjects that using technology as a teaching tool to provide educational opportunities for students to meet career objectives.
- Reserving public funding for education to support public schools. Maryland PTA does not support using public funds to support private and religiously-based schools via vouchers, scholarships, or tax credits.
- Establishment of a statewide process to plan for the establishment of universal voluntary early childhood education by the end of the current decade.

School Construction and Modernization-Maryland PTA supports

- Funding for public school construction and modernization that addresses the physical condition of school buildings and the capacity of buildings to provide the appropriate space for physical education, technology education, school meals and state-rated class sizes.
- Elimination of the use of portable structures and limitations on the duration of their use when they are the only option.
- Inclusion of security features when portable structures are used, along with secure passageways to and from main school buildings.
- Review and modification of state-rated capacity formula and teaching stations.
- Opportunities for public input and oversight of construction projects involving parents and community stakeholders.

Health, Wellness and Safety within Schools- Maryland PTA supports public policies that recognize the essential relationship between health and learning and promote the complete physical, mental and social well-being of children and youth in a safe, healthy and nurturing home, school, and community environment. Therefore, we advocate for implementation of standards promulgated by public health and safety professionals with regard to physical education, school meal programs, and safety. These include improving nutritional requirements for school foods, regulation of competitive food sales, strong anti-bullying and non-

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Maryland PTA Legislative Agenda 2014

discrimination programs, and policies that promote wellness through meaningful mid-day recesses and regular ongoing physical education. We also call for increasing reimbursement rates for school lunch programs so that more nutrient rich foods can be served. We also support providing affordable access to health care services for all children, regardless of the legal status of their parents, through mechanisms such as the Children's Health Insurance Program and the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange.

Strong State Academic Standards- Maryland PTA supports Maryland's efforts to improve educational outcomes for students by adopting a set of nationwide consistent, clear, and more rigorous K-12 academic standards in English language arts and mathematics. Because students need problem solving and critical thinking skills to succeed in career and life skills, Maryland PTA believes that a state-developed curriculum tailored to the Common Core Standards Initiative (CCSI) will provide fundamental knowledge for a global economy. Maryland PTA supports activities to inform parents and educators of CCSI-based requirements and implementation strategies at each grade level and how Maryland's increased academic standards will lead to improved student achievement. MD PTA also supports activities that include parents and classroom teachers in planning and evaluating the implementation of CCSI-based curricula and its outcomes at the local level.

Positive Behavior Supports and Interventions- Maryland PTA supports the development of recommendations for reinforcing student attendance, and setting positive expectations for student behaviors. Compacts must include rational "open" disciplinary policies that include the implementation of school wide Positive Behavior Supports and Interventions (PBIS) or similar evidence-based programs. MD PTA supports phasing-out zero-tolerance policies and out-of-school suspensions because these are often counter-productive and contribute to achievement gaps based upon socio-economics, culture, and/or special needs of students.

Strong Teacher In-Service Education- Because high quality teaching is the foundation of all learning, Maryland PTA supports

- In-service and pre-service teacher education programs that include elements of effective parent involvement, diversity, and cultural proficiency.
- Full-funding of staff development needed to ensure that all students benefit from high quality teachers and programs designed to meet Maryland's high student performance standards.
- Programs that prepare professional educators to teach a diverse student population including ethnicity, socio-economic status, English Language Learners, giftedness, and inclusion of students with special needs in regular classrooms.

Effective and Compassionate Juvenile Justice—Maryland PTA supports

- Dropout prevention programs instituted to address the diverse needs of students at risk of leaving school without a diploma.
- Evidence-based truancy programs that provide interventions which are non-punitive, support effective family counseling, and provide community-based solutions.
- Specialized training for school-based law enforcement and calls to develop a uniform school discipline code.

Protection of Human Rights and Dignity

Consistent with National PTA's Core Value of Inclusiveness and Position Statement on Citizenship and Equality, Maryland PTA will support legislation that seeks equal protection and dignity under the law for all persons and families, and full access to public education.

Maryland PTA Supports National PTA Positions on Federal Issues

Since its inception, National PTA (NPTA) has advocated for improvements to federal education policy for the benefit of every child. NPTA will continue to work with Congress and the Administration on reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), currently known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB), improvements to special education through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and quality early childhood education programs such as Head Start, Early Head Start, and the Childcare and Development Block Grant. As always, Maryland PTA will join National PTA in advocating for increased federal investment in education, with the goal of ensuring that all students graduate from high school college- and career-ready. Specific issues of focus will be the following.

General Education Retaining and strengthening parent involvement provisions of Section 1118 of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) by creating incentives on the state, district, and school levels to meaningfully engage families in their children's education using research-based strategies practices.

Maryland PTA Legislative Agenda 2014

- Codifying NPTA's National Standards for School-Family Partnerships thereby providing a statutory definition and framework on effective family engagement in education in Section 1118 of Title I.
- Increasing the Local Educational Agency (LEA) reservation of funds for parent involvement activities under Section 1118 from one percent to two percent and amending the distribution of funds to allow for innovative and research-based district-wide activities to increase family engagement.

Special Education Because almost 6 million students in the United States receive special education services under IDEA, National PTA supports amending the act to require:

- Transition planning services for special education students begin no later than the age of 14;
- Encourage school districts to employ transition planning coordinators to assist in the facilitation of transition planning services for special education students and their families;
- Include the special education population in any development or implementation of student and school accountability measures and/or performance targets under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

Reauthorization of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Programs Protecting the rights of children and youth involved in the justice system has long been at the core of PTA's advocacy work. Each year, approximately 7,500 children are held in adult jails before they are tried, with truancy cases accounting for a large percent of all petitioned status offense cases. NPTA believes that children arrested for non-criminal behaviors, such as truancy, are in need of family-focused, school and home-based interventions, rather than placement in juvenile detention centers. NPTA therefore advocates for eliminating the Valid Court Order exception to the Deinstitutionalization of Status Offenders Core Requirement of the JJDP.

Children's Health and Nutrition National PTA prioritizes the health and well-being of every child through implementation of and improvements to nutrition laws. NPTA therefore supports

- Implementation of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) proposed update of nutrition standards for the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs, as intended by the Healthy and Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010.
- Language in the Healthy and Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 that requires the USDA to set nutrition standards for competitive foods.
- Implementation of USDA regulations that protect school-based fundraisers that have historically played an integral role in fundraising opportunities for community-based non-profit school support organizations (such as PTAs and booster clubs).

State Children's Health Insurance Program- Supports the effort to provide health coverage for all children through the Children's Health Insurance Program, Medicaid, and Health Benefit Exchanges established under the Affordable Care Act.

Early Childhood Education- Research indicates that students that complete prekindergarten or similar early childhood programs achieve at higher levels and graduate at higher rates than their peers who did not participate in these programs. NPTA therefore advocates for the expansion of Early Childhood Education to prepare our nation's children for success in the competitive 21st-century economy. Providing effective, targeted support and intervention for children and parents beginning at birth will improve outcomes, including improved graduation rates, increased employment and earnings, and reduced likelihood of incarceration.

Education Funding- National PTA seeks

- Restoration of funding for the Parental Information and Resource Centers
- Increased funding for Titles I and III of ESEA.
- Increased funding for IDEA state grants so that the federal government provides for at least 20 percent of the excess cost of educating children with disabilities. This must be the first step in reaching the 40 percent of APPE Congress promised to pay when the law was first enacted.
- Increased investments in quality early learning programs, including Early Head Start, Head Start, the Child Care and Development Block Grant, and the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program.
- Elimination of sequesters of education funding instituted in 2013, which have diminished federal support of state and local public education.

Additional Information on National PTA advocacy is available at. <http://www.pta.org/advocacy>

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