Prince George’s County Board of Education

Legislative Platform

2018 Session of the Maryland General Assembly

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Overview

The goal of the 2018 Legislative Platform is to provide our elected representatives and community with information and positions the Prince George’s County Board of Education has taken on key legislative issues that may arise during the 2018 Maryland General Assembly session. This Platform also addresses specific issues that are critical to supporting the school system’s vision of ensuring all students, regardless of background or experience, have access to safe, high-quality learning environments, a broad array of educational opportunities, and effective support systems that equip them to graduate college and career ready.

Together, with our elected representatives and partners with a vested interest in the success of our school system, we will advocate on behalf of our over 131,000 students, staff and community by contributing our perspective on the important policy changes impacting public education that will be considered during the 2018 Maryland General Assembly session.

For more information about this Platform or other legislative matters, please contact Demetria Tobias, Esq., Associate General Counsel – Legislative Programs, at (301) 952-6048 or demetria.tobias@pgcps.org.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Funding of Excellence in Public Education</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local School Board Authority/Governance</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance of Effort</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School and Student Safety</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislated Curriculum and Testing</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public School Construction</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retirement and Pension</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Nutrition and Health</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers and Instructional Personnel</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation Funding</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charter Schools</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vouchers, Tuition Tax Credits, Tax Deductions &amp; Textbooks</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Funding of Excellence in Public Education

The Prince George’s County Board of Education supports:

- Full funding of the Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act for Fiscal Year 2019 (Thornton Funding), including resumption of the annual inflation adjustment.

- Provision of full State funding for universal pre-kindergarten and inclusion of pre-kindergarten students in local school system enrollment counts for purposes of state and local funding formulas.

- Updating the Geographic Cost of Education Index (GCEI) formula for Fiscal Year 2019 and beyond.

- Consideration of all available revenue options to support Maryland’s public schools on a sufficient and ongoing basis.

- Funding to enhance efforts by local school systems to close achievement gaps.

- State funding to implement, support and expand dual enrollment programs, Middle College Programs and P-Tech schools.

- Legislation to update and improve Maryland’s school finance system.

The Prince George’s County Board of Education opposes:

- Additional or unfunded state mandates which diminish the ability of local school systems to respond to unique needs and circumstances of each district.

- Any form of public money going to private schools, under any name - such as vouchers, tax credits, certificates, and scholarships - given the many unmet needs in public schools and the fact that nonpublic schools are neither subject to state accountability measures nor to the same legal requirements as public schools.
Local School Board Authority/Governance

The Prince George’s County Board of Education supports:

- Local control of educational policy, curriculum, and administration, including the school calendar or school schedule.

- Authorizing the State Superintendent to permit a local Board’s strategic plan to continue to serve as its comprehensive master plan and to submit annual updates thereto, in measuring standards specified in the Bridge to Excellence Act.

- Legislation addressing the installation of artificial or synthetic turf fields at public high schools, provided funding for the fields is not required from the Board’s operating budget, and the Board retains authority to determine prioritization for installation of the fields. The Board is best able to approve the order of installation based on field condition, school enrollment size and geographic location, in the context of the school system’s construction and capital improvement needs.

The Prince George’s County Board of Education opposes:

- Legislative initiatives that have the effect of reducing or circumscribing local board authority.

- Legislation that creates unfunded mandates.

- Any legislation or Executive Order to preclude the authority of local school boards to determine the parameters of the school calendar or school schedule, such as a post-Labor Day commencement, start times, or mandatory classes/programs (e.g., physical education, art, etc.).
The General Assembly provided for “maintenance of effort” (MOE) funding of education by local governments to ensure that all students receive the base funding needed for their education, irrespective of the economic climate, consistent with the obligation to provide free and adequate public education under the Constitution of Maryland.

Current law also strengthens and enhances the required local government funding level by, among other things, placing the penalty for failing to meet MOE on the local government - where it belongs - not the local school system, and authorizing the State to withhold the required MOE deficiency amount from a County’s local income tax revenues.

### Maintenance of Effort

**The Prince George’s County Board of Education supports:**

- Existing law that specifies the County Council’s maintenance of effort minimum funding requirement under Education Article section 5-202.

- The current MOE waiver process, which, among other things, provides accountability by requiring local governments intent on not providing MOE to request a waiver from the State Board of Education.

- Maintaining current law, which authorizes the county governing body to set a property tax rate higher than authorized in the charter, or collect more property tax revenues than authorized under the charter, for the sole purpose of funding the approved budget of the county board of education.

**The Prince George’s County Board of Education opposes:**

- Any legislative change that would permit local governments – either for Fiscal Year 2019 or beyond – to fund school systems without regard to maintenance of effort, or to grant a “blanket” waiver of maintenance of effort for Fiscal Year 2019 or beyond.
School and Student Safety

The Prince George’s County Board of Education supports:

- State and local sharing or state assumption of costs associated with school building alarms, cameras, and security technology, thereby freeing school system resources to address their core mission - student achievement.

- Legislative efforts to eliminate impediments to communication among school system, law enforcement, and juvenile justice officials.

- Legislation that supports and funds diversion or other programs which minimize the overrepresentation of youth, particularly youth of color, in the criminal justice system for minor offenses.

- Efforts to include educational leaders in the continuing development of a homeland security plan.

- Legislation and program initiatives that contribute to the safety and well-being of students in school and in the community, including strengthening positive individual school environments and promoting preventative mental health initiatives.

- Legislation that supports and funds alternative programs and services for students with discipline challenges.

The Prince George’s County Board of Education opposes:

- Legislation proposed as “quick fixes” or “band aid” solutions - such as to authorize school personnel to carry handguns on school property, to permit electronic control devices to be used in schools, or to mandate a School Resource Officer (SRO) in every school - even if the proposal is not to divert funding from Pre-K-12 education.
Legislated Curriculum and Testing

The Prince George’s County Board of Education supports:

- Local decision-making authority in developing curriculum and strengthening the effectiveness of the entire educational program.
- Increased resources, such as additional technology, infrastructure, human resources and time for increased professional development and planning, to assist with implementation of the Common Core assessments.
- Legislative initiatives to require MSDE, not local boards of education, to publicize information assuring comparability between the 2015 – 2017 PARCC assessment results.

The Prince George’s County Board of Education opposes:

- The concept that local public school curriculum content be mandated or controlled by the State Legislature. In attaining State and local educational goals, inclusion of selected content is established through a system of statewide and local accountability, vested in those charged with overseeing the delivery of public education.
- Legislation to determine the number, quality or necessity of locally administered assessments. Local boards, acting in concert with the State Board of Education, should maintain the authority to determine how assessments are administered and used to inform instruction in the respective jurisdictions.
- Efforts to loosen State restrictions on who can administer State assessments.
Public School Construction

The Prince George’s County Board of Education supports:

- The Public School Construction Program receiving at least $325 million per year statewide.
- State and local sharing of the significant capital improvement costs that have resulted from mandated all-day kindergarten and pre-kindergarten for economically-disadvantaged four year olds.
- State and local sharing or state assumption of architectural, engineering, and site development costs associated with planning and designing school construction and renovation projects.
- State and local sharing or state assumption of costs associated with school building alarms, cameras, fencing, and security technology, thereby freeing school system resources to address their core mission – student achievement.
- Ongoing research by the Interagency Committee on School Construction to identify creative means to produce additional funding and to create more reliable revenue streams to meet public school construction needs.
- Expansion of the State’s bonding capacity to meet the school construction needs of school districts in Maryland.
- Supplemental State funding to enable our county, and other large jurisdictions, to receive the additional resources needed to effectively assess, renovate and utilize our school buildings over the next 20 years.

The Prince George’s County Board of Education opposes:

- New State initiatives – however salutary – that seek to be funded from the base of the Public School Construction Program rather than funds to be allocated over and above the minimal amount set for statewide school construction costs.
- Any State mandated school sizes for elementary, middle or high schools.
Since 2006, the General Assembly has approved legislation that has resulted in sweeping changes to the State Teacher Retirement System for all current and future employees. Most recently in 2012, the General Assembly shifted the normal costs of teachers' pensions from the State to the local boards of education while maintaining the State Pension System over a four-year period, with the local boards responsible for 50% of the costs in FY 2012, 85% in FY 2015, and 100% in FY 2016.

Retirement and Pension

The Prince George’s County Board of Education supports:

- Continuation of an employer based pension plan.

The Prince George’s County Board of Education opposes:

- Any further legislation, after years of initiatives, to revise the retirement systems or increase the fiscal imposition upon local Boards of Education and local jurisdictions.
School Nutrition and Health

The Prince George’s County Board of Education supports:

- The state requirements, in conjunction with locally developed and implemented policies, ensuring that public school meals meet the nutritional needs of the students.
- The continued expansion and funding of the Maryland Meals for Achievement Program and universal breakfast program.
- Legislation to provide and expand resources for school based health center services.

The Prince George’s County Board of Education opposes:

- Any proposed requirement circumscribing the authority of the local school board to set policy.

Healthy school environments are vital to meeting the nutritional needs of students and, increasingly, providing an important safety net as part of the health care for Maryland’s public school children.

Current federal laws already prohibit the sale of foods that do not meet USDA Smart Snack Standards from 12:01am to 30 minutes after the school day. The Maryland State Department of Education policies further enforce the federal requirements and, in addition, PGCPS prohibits access to vending machines not operated by The Department of Food & Nutrition services throughout the school day. These state and federal requirements, in conjunction with locally developed and implemented policies, appropriately ensure that public schools meet the nutritional needs of students.

Currently, students at 111 schools in PGCPS benefit from the state sponsored Maryland Meals for Achievement, and district sponsored Breakfast in the Classroom Programs offering free breakfast to all students. PGCPS also participates in the federally funded Fresh Fruits & Vegetables Program, designed to introduce students to a variety of fresh fruits and vegetable and the After School Supper Programs.
Teachers and Instructional Personnel

The Prince George’s County Board of Education supports:

- Programs emphasizing competitive salaries and professional work environments to attract and retain highly qualified teachers, with special emphasis on a diverse workforce.

- The goal of a highly qualified teacher in every classroom and flexibility to establish alternative entry routes into teaching to provide localities the flexibility in hiring qualified persons, including career-changers, not formally prepared for teaching careers.

- Increases in state support for teacher salaries to aid in the recruitment and retention of highly qualified teaching personnel, particularly where increased credential requirements accelerate local wage market pressures.

- Continuation of monetary awards for public school teachers who have earned certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and meaningful financial assistance for those teachers pursuing such rigorous certification.

- Legislation to create a pilot program to grow our own teaching force and encourage or enhance the participation of underrepresented groups in the teaching profession.
Transportation Funding

The Prince George’s County Board of Education supports:

- Updating the formula and providing full funding for the student transportation provisions of the Bridge to Excellence Act so that increases in public school transportation costs do not prevent local boards from meeting other funding responsibilities.
Charter Schools

The Prince George’s County Board of Education supports:

- Compliance with federal and state laws governing public schools that require fiscal responsibility and accountability.
- Legislation to provide specific procedures for dealing with the disposition of a charter school’s assets upon the school’s closure or dissolution with state technical assistance.
- Legislation to clarify ownership of failed charter school assets which have been purchased with public funds.
- Legislation to clarify that the requirement for local school systems to provide commensurate funding to charter schools under Education Article §9-109 does not include funding for any services that a charter school does not provide, including transportation.

The Prince George’s County Board of Education opposes:

- Any legislation that creates blanket waivers for charter schools that release them from compliance with state law and board policies.
- Legislation that permits internet-based “virtual charter schools”, which promote home schools.
- Efforts to weaken academic or fiscal accountability or requirements of public charter schools to local boards of education.
- Efforts to expand the sole authorization of public charter schools beyond local boards of education.
- Legislation to require a set percentage of local funding for public charter schools, or which requires funding for programs and services actually provided by the local board.
- Efforts to divert needed capital improvement funds for projects at privately owned charter school buildings.
Vouchers, Tuition Tax Credits, Tax Deductions & Textbooks

The Prince George’s County Board of Education supports:

- Strong public accountability measures for every public dollar spent.
- The application of public school academic accountability standards and regulatory requirements to all non-public schools receiving public funds.
- Legislative efforts to decrease or eliminate the State textbook program or other State aid to nonpublic schools.

The Prince George’s County Board of Education opposes:

- The notion that State textbook program or any aid to private schools be provided, expanded, or continued.
- Any reduction of educational dollars from public school funding that is not productive for public school education.
- Maryland tax credits to individuals or corporations who donate funds to charitable organizations that provide scholarship programs to students attending private and parochial schools.

By design, nonpublic schools are private entities that are self-supporting and neither subject to state accountability measures nor to the same legal requirements as public schools. Consequently, the Prince George’s County Board of Education opposes the diversion or forbearance of public education funds to nonpublic schools as a means of reimbursing parents for their children’s educational expenses, grades preK-12.

All taxpayers, those with children in public or nonpublic schools and those without children in school, enjoy the same benefits of an educated citizenry. All have the same responsibility to support the public education system.
Prince George’s County Public Schools

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Outstanding Academic Achievement for All Students