

December 3, 2020

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Dear Colleagues:

National PTA is grateful for the opportunity to meet and share our priorities with the Biden transition team on Nov. 19. Our association looks forward to collaborating on the important issues facing our children and schools under President-Elect Biden's administration.

PTA has been the conscience of our nation for over 120 years, advocating to better the education and well-being of our children and empowering families to support their child's learning and growth. National PTA and our 3 million members firmly believe that every student has the right to a high-quality education in a safe and inclusive school community to help them reach their full potential. And we believe that strong family-school partnerships—along with adequate funding and sound policies that support families, schools and students—are vital to the effective education of students. We also believe it is essential that parents have a seat at the table whenever decisions are made that impact children. We look forward to working with the Department of Education and the Biden Administration to fully realize the power of the parent voice.

Our education system must be firmly centered in the belief that equity in education is not just a vision or a goal, but rather a necessity. To that end, National PTA has engaged in, and is committed to, deep, program-wide work and advocating on diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) for parents and students alike. We fully embrace this belief and the work of over 22,000 PTAs around the country reflects the importance of equity both inside and outside the classroom. National PTA recently adopted two positions statements, "[Say Their Names, Addressing Institutional or Systemic Racism](#)"<sup>1</sup> and "[Inclusive Curricula in K-12 Education](#)"<sup>2</sup> which speak to PTAs commitment around the crucial work of DEI.

Please find below an outline of the priorities for the incoming Biden Administration. Our thoughts are presented with the most pressing issues listed first—issues that we urge the administration to address within its first 100 days—followed by the issues that we recognize will take longer to address, but are still of critical importance.

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<sup>1</sup> Say Their Names, Addressing Institutional or Systemic Racism, National PTA Position Statement <https://www.pta.org/docs/default-source/files/advocacy/position-statements/addressing-institutional-or-systemic-racism-ps.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Inclusive Curricula in K-12 Education, National PTA Position Statement <https://www.pta.org/home/advocacy/ptas-positions/Individual-Position-Statements/position-statement--inclusive-curricula-in-k-12-education>

## First 100 Days Priorities

*Repeal the Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Sex in Education Programs or Activities Receiving Federal Financial Assistance (8,5 FR 30026).*

National PTA [expressed deep concerns](#)<sup>3</sup> regarding the proposed rule on Title IX. Our association believes the recent Title IX regulation is unnecessary and can undermine the health and safety of students and their ability to report and seek redress for Title IX violations in school.

*Repeal the Public Charge Regulation -(22 CFR 40.41).*

National PTA opposes the public charge regulation, which diminishes children's access to adequate nutrition, reliable health care and stable housing. This regulation inflicts lasting damage on children's emotional well-being and ability to learn. Since our association's founding in 1897, National PTA has remained committed to ensuring all children residing in the United States have the opportunity to reach their full potential and become productive members of society.

*Reinstate the 2014 School Discipline Guidance issued by the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice.*

[National PTA joined other national education and civil rights](#) organizations in expressing disappointment in the rescission of the 2014 School Discipline Guidance.<sup>4</sup> National PTA firmly believes that children and youth deserve to be in school learning alongside their peers. Suspension, expulsion and other punishments that remove students from the learning environment have huge implications for student achievement and success. The rescission of the 2014 School Discipline Guidance was a massive step backward in the collective effort to create healthy school environments.

*Reopening Schools Safely.*

National PTA has been clear about the need to [follow guidance from health professionals and agencies](#) and the need to engage parents and other stakeholders in decisions on how (and when) to reopen schools.<sup>5</sup> National PTA has also emphasized that reopening schools is vital to the continuity of education, and that schools must be prepared to address the transition back to school, the trauma of a pandemic and the many instructional issues—including the effects of learning loss and the digital divide.

National PTA also believes that vaccinations protect the health and safety of children and has a position statement which encourages each SEA (State Education Agency) to require certification of immunizations. For schools to safely reopen nationwide National PTA would support both school-aged children and school staff to be priority recipients for COVID-19 vaccinations. However, for this to happen National PTA firmly believes that [a significant infusion of federal funds is needed immediately](#) to support local educational agencies, disadvantaged students, family engagement, remote learning and nutrition programs.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> National PTA Comments in Response to Proposed Rulemaking: Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Sex in Education Programs or Activities Receiving Federal Financial Assistance <https://www.pta.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/national-pta-comments-on-title-ix.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Group letter sent to Secretary DeVos and Acting Attorney General Whitaker regarding the rescission of the 2014 School Discipline Guidance

<sup>5</sup> National PTA Position Statement, Reopening of Public PreK-12 Schools for the 2020-2021 School Year <https://www.pta.org/docs/default-source/files/advocacy/position-statements/reopening-schools-for-2020-2021-ps.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> National PTA June 29, 2020 Letter on C4 Funds, <https://www.pta.org/docs/default-source/files/advocacy/2020-letters-to-policy-makers/june-29-pta-reopening-c-4-priorities-letter.pdf>

## Longer Term Priorities

*Address school climate issues by supporting and promoting policies which help to ensure that schools are safe, supportive and equitable environments for all students.*

The Department of Education should use its bully pulpit to promote policies which help to keep students safe and supported. Specifically, ED should support a ban on the use of corporal punishment and the ban on the use of seclusion, and support the use of restraint only in instances of imminent danger of serious physical injury. Additionally, ED should support increased funding of the Student Support and Academic Enrichment (SSAE) grants under Title IV-A of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) which were designed to provide support for much needed health and safety programs, well-rounded education programs, and the effective use of education technology.

*Invest in and scale-up the Statewide Family Engagement Centers (SFECs)*

Parents and their children are the primary consumers of our nation's public education system, and over 40 years of data shows that family engagement in schools has a drastic impact on student achievement and school improvement. However, family engagement often takes a back seat to other, less effective policy approaches to improving the development and academic outcomes of children. States and school districts need to make more investments in family engagement, ensure parents have a seat at the table when decisions are made, and work with parents and families as partners throughout the school year.

The Statewide Family Engagement Centers carry out parent education and family engagement in education, programs, and provide comprehensive training and technical assistance to SEAs, LEAs, schools identified by SEAs and LEAs, organizations that support family-school partnerships and other such programs. The SFECs are currently appropriated at \$10M. The recent Senate Labor/HHS/Education appropriations bill would appropriate \$15M for the SFECs. National PTA firmly supports an appropriation of \$15M (a \$5M or 50% increase) in any final appropriations package.

*Ensure that public dollars remain in public schools, specifically taking steps to eliminate funding for the D.C. voucher program.*

National PTA advocates for the improvement of public education for all children and to guarantee public funds are not diverted to any private school choice proposal and/or voucher system. National PTA also opposes tax credits and deductions for elementary and secondary school tuition and other education-related expenses for public and nonpublic school students. The Department of Education should promote policies that would require private schools that participate in any federal program or receive any federal aid to abide by all federal civil rights laws and be far more transparent in how they use taxpayer funding.

*Fully fund the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).*

Full funding of IDEA was a commitment Congress made in 1975 when it passed the bill. Originally, the federal government promised to fund 40% of the cost for each student with a disability, with states shouldering the rest. Forty-five years later, the promise has still not been met. Currently, the federal government is paying less than 15% per student, which shortchanges students and educators and requires states to divert funds from other vital areas. [National PTA firmly supports fully funding IDEA.](#)<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> IDEA Full Funding Coalition sign on letter support of the IDEA Full Funding Act <https://www.pta.org/docs/default-source/files/advocacy/idea-coalition-joint-house-and-senate-final.pdf>

*Work with USDA and Congress to reauthorize The Child Nutrition Act.*

Healthy children learn better and are more productive—both in and out of the classroom. Setting strong nutritional standards in our nation’s schools is essential to combating the concerning obesity rates among American children. Providing our nation’s youth with healthy food options and nutrition education is key to their long-term health and success.

*Invest meaningfully in school infrastructure.*

There are about 100,000 public K-12 school facilities across the country. On any given school day, about 20% of Americans spend time in a school building. However, the average public school is nearly 50 years old. Local districts and states have shouldered the vast majority of costs associated with school infrastructure needs, but often do not have adequate funds. The federal government must invest in school infrastructure to address air quality hazards, substandard heating and cooling equipment, unsafe drinking water supplies and lead contamination in schools.

National PTA and our 3 million members are excited and ready to work with the Biden Administration as we navigate these complex times. Should you have any questions or require any additional information please don’t hesitate to reach out to Amanda Lowe, Director of Government Affairs at [alowe@PTA.org](mailto:alowe@PTA.org) or at (703) 589-0841.

Sincerely,



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