



# National PTA PUBLIC POLICY PRIORITIES for the 118th Congress (2023-2025)

**National PTA will work with the 118th Congress, the U.S. Department of Education and the Biden/Harris Administration to ensure that every child has access to a fair and equitable education.**

*The long-term success of our nation depends on quality federal investments in our education system. National PTA will continue to advocate for increased federal investment in public education to ensure all children have access to adequately funded public schools that improve their overall well-being and allow students to reach their full potential.*

## **PTA Calls on Congress and the Administration to Strengthen Family-School Partnerships and Invest in Meaningful Family Engagement.**

Decades of research shows that family engagement matters for student success—students whose families are engaged are more likely to attend school, avoid discipline problems, achieve at higher levels and graduate. Parents and families have always played an important role in education, are key partners in their children's educational success and provide important perspectives on decisions impacting their children and schools. However, far too often when policy is considered and legislation is crafted, family engagement is not directly called out as a critical strategy in achieving desired student outcomes. Policymakers can and should support schools in their efforts to meaningfully share power with parents, welcome and communicate effectively with all families and collaborate with families and the community to support student success. PTA believes it is essential that meaningful family engagement strategies are embedded throughout education policy and calls on Congress and the Administration to prioritize family engagement at the outset of all policy discussions.

### **Policies and legislation must:**

- ✓ Provide funding to incentivize and support family engagement initiatives in schools and communities across the country, including increasing funding for the federal Statewide Family Engagement Centers program.
- ✓ Increase awareness of effective family engagement strategies, including expanding research, technical assistance and training for school personnel.
- ✓ Encourage greater transparency with families about decisions impacting their children. This includes proactive, timely and two-way communication in an understandable and accessible format and in a language families can understand.

## **PTA Calls on Congress and the Administration to Enhance School and Community Safety and Prioritize the Protection of Children and Youth.**

School safety is a critical priority for all parents, educators, students and community members. Students and educators have a right to attend schools that are safe and conducive to learning and achievement, yet schools often experience critical incidents such as suicide, natural disasters or a mass casualty event that can have a devastating impact and long-term harm on whole school communities. PTA believes efforts to address school and community safety must involve all stakeholders, especially students, parents and families and urges consideration of a variety of factors including the physical and psychological safety of students while maintaining a positive school climate for all children to learn, grow and reach their potential.

### **Policies and legislation must:**

- ✓ Support sensible solutions to gun violence, including promoting the safe and secure storage of firearms, strengthening the federal background check system, investing in evidence-based community violence interventions and addressing youth access to firearms, especially assault or military-style weapons.
- ✓ Promote the inclusion of safety education in the curriculum at all levels of public schools and incorporate an age-appropriate violence prevention component into existing courses of study.
- ✓ Enhance the physical safety of school buildings, address environmental health hazards and invest in disaster preparedness through emergency planning, infrastructure improvements and physical security measures without undermining the school environment or causing psychological harm through trainings, lock downs or responses to false threats of violence, also known as "swatting."
- ✓ Prioritize restorative justice, positive school discipline and alternative dispute resolution techniques over the detention, exclusion or incarceration of youth, including providing training for school personnel on safe de-escalation techniques, trauma-informed care and positive behavioral



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**As our families, children and schools rebuild after the COVID-19 pandemic, National PTA will work with federal policymakers to support successful strategies for academic recovery, including new and innovative approaches such as summer learning and after-school enrichment programs.**

interventions and supports, while intentionally eliminating any discipline practices that may historically or currently target youth of color and contribute to a school-to-prison pipeline.

- ✓ Foster the development of full-service community schools, strengthen community partnerships and encourage the adoption of a whole-child approach that responds to the mental, physical, behavioral, developmental and academic needs of all students.

## **PTA Calls on Congress and the Administration to Help Schools Create a Welcoming, Supportive and Inclusive Learning Environment for All Students.**

Every student can reach their full potential when the school environment is one in which they are accepted, truly valued and can authentically be themselves. PTA firmly believes that all students—including students from historically marginalized communities—have the right to a high-quality, equitable education in a welcoming, supportive and inclusive school. PTA advocates for policies and legislation that ensure equity for every student, promote a positive school climate and support the whole child and family to prepare all students with social and emotional skills to succeed in adulthood.

### **Policies and legislation must:**

- ✓ Promote positive behavioral interventions that are conducive to learning and discourage the use of disciplinary practices that are harmful, overly punitive or disproportionately applied to certain students based on their disability, race, religion or other protected characteristic.
- ✓ Support every student's mental health, teach essential life skills and provide and connect students with necessary behavioral and mental health resources at school and in their community.
- ✓ Encourage the development of inclusive curricula and materials that are historically accurate, age and developmentally appropriate and provide a means for students to explore diverse concepts, cultures and perspectives.

- ✓ Provide the foundation for all children to learn and thrive, including basic necessities like access to clean air, water and healthy nutrition in all communities.
- ✓ Ensure equal access to education programs and activities for all children and youth and strengthen protections against discrimination in the school setting.

## **PTA Calls on Congress and the Administration to Promote a Safe and Positive Online Experience for Children and Youth and Expand Access to Technology that Fosters Learning and Well-Being.**

A founding principle of PTA's mission is to promote the safety and well-being of all children and youth. PTA believes that technology can enhance the learning experience and foster creativity and connectedness among students, educators and families. However, technology can also give rise to digital environments that could be harmful to children and youth. PTA supports efforts to ensure a safe and positive digital experience for all children and families, fostering learning and healthy lifestyles for all children and equipping them with the technological literacy and access to thrive in an increasingly digital world.

### **Policies and legislation must:**

- ✓ Strengthen online privacy protections for children and youth.
- ✓ Expand broadband access and enhance digital infrastructure to ensure equity.
- ✓ Increase awareness, including research, of the impact of technology on children and strengthen digital literacy skills for children and families.
- ✓ Address threats to the safety and well-being of children that can happen online, such as cyberbullying, exploitation, criminal activity and violence.

Questions? Email National PTA Director of Government Affairs  
Kate Clabaugh ([kclabaugh@PTA.org](mailto:kclabaugh@PTA.org))