

Invest in Health and Well-Being of All Kids

National PTA urges Congress to ensure safeguards are in place to protect our children. The long-term success of our nation depends on increased supports and protections for our children and robust and equitable investments in our public education system.

From crumbling infrastructure and gun violence to inadequate ratios of school counselors to support students and too many children struggling with hunger and food insecurity, there have been far too many children left with insufficient resources.

This is why National PTA and our 3.5 million members across the country advocate to ensure schools have the proper resources to help every child learn, grow and succeed. **To make every child's potential a reality, Congress must:**



Increase funding for the Statewide Family Engagement Centers to \$15 million

The Statewide Family Engagement Centers (SFEC) is a bipartisan program that provides competitive federal grants to statewide entities to promote and implement evidence-based family engagement strategies that further the academic progress of our nation's children.

- Currently, SFECs are supporting children and families in 13 states around the country. Unfortunately, due to funding constraints, families without a center in their state have not been able to benefit from this program.
- We urge Congress to increase funding to at least \$15 million in FY 2020 and put this program on a funding path to ensure that all families across the country benefit in the coming years.
- According to a Rice University study, family engagement is the most important driver of a parent's satisfaction with their child's school, yet school districts frequently fail to offer parents a voice in the education system. SFECs can provide critical professional development to school leaders and teachers on effective family engagement strategies.



Include schools in any comprehensive infrastructure package

A growing body of research shows that high-quality facilities help improve academic achievement, reduce student and staff absences, and reduce suspensions. Despite the positive effects of adequate facilities, far too many children and adults continue to attend and work in schools that are unsafe and unhealthy.

- Congress must include provisions of the Rebuild America's Schools Act ([H.R.865/S.266](#)) in any infrastructure package considered. H.R 865/S.266 would create a \$70 billion grant program and \$30 billion tax credit bond program prioritizing Title I schools with facilities that pose health and safety risks to students and staff. The bill would also create over 1.9 million jobs by addressing critical physical and digital infrastructure needs in schools.

- The average public school is nearly 50 years old. Even if local districts find innovative and creative ways to finance infrastructure projects, some districts will inevitably be left behind. Similar to the federal role in upgrading roads and bridges, there is a federal role to help eliminate the extreme inequities that currently exist in school facilities.
- Congress must ensure that public schools are included in any infrastructure package considered this year. Schools are a critical part of our nation's infrastructure and it is essential that investments are made to repair, renovate and modernize school facilities to ensure they are safe, healthy and well-equipped to advance student achievement, help grow our economy and improve our competitiveness as a nation.



Improve the federal school meal program through Child Nutrition Reauthorization (CNR)

National PTA has always recognized that children need access to nutritious meals in order to thrive in and out of the classroom, and we have a proud legacy of leading the federal school meal program. Our advocacy was instrumental in the adoption of the original child nutrition legislation, the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act of 1946. Since that time, we have continuously pushed Congress to fulfill its responsibility to ensure that our nation's vulnerable children are provided healthy school meals.

- We urge Congress to reassert its authority over the federal school meal program and reauthorize the child nutrition program to ensure food served in schools meets the highest nutritional standards. Over the last few years, the Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act of 2010 has been subject to repeated regulatory rollbacks, weakening standards for milk, whole grains and sodium served to children.
- Food consumed at school can make up half of a child's daily calorie intake—and even more for the 22 million children who participate in the free and reduced-price school meal program. For this reason, it's essential that school meals and snacks meet nutrition standards aligned with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGAs) for fruits and vegetables, sodium and whole grains, milk and added sugars.
- No child should be denied a school meal or otherwise shamed because of an unpaid school meal bill. Reauthorization of CNR must include language from the Anti-Lunch Shaming Act ([H.R. 2311/S. 1119](#)) to prohibit the stigmatization of children who are unable to pay for meals.
- The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends students have at least 20 minutes for "seat time" for lunch during the school day. Students who have more time for lunch, increase their consumption of food and key nutrients, include fruits and vegetables and decrease of plate waste. Congress should include the Healthy Meal Time Act ([H.R. 5463](#)) in CNR to help districts and schools implement best practices for meal times.
- Congress must include the School Food Modernization Act ([H.R.3444/S.1949](#)) in CNR. Many school kitchens were built decades ago without adequate capacity for procuring, storing, refrigerating, preparing and serving the nutritious foods they would like to offer today. This bill will give school districts and food service administrators the tools and resources they need to prepare meals that meet robust nutrition standards and provide wholesome, delicious meals that children will enjoy.