



2021 LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM

The PFT calls on legislators at all levels of government to commit to and prioritize an investment agenda that addresses the deep seated racial and socioeconomic inequity that has disproportionately affected Philadelphia's schoolchildren.

For decades, our students have been robbed of their constitutional right to a thorough and efficient public education system. We have taken our fight to the ballot box, to the streets, and to the courts. But still, for far too many across the country, the promise of an education system that recognizes their inherent value as a human being goes unrealized. The chronic underfunding of an education system is a feature—not a bug—of a society deeply rooted in racism. And as educators, and quite frankly as human beings, we have a fundamental responsibility to recognize the systems that perpetuate the dehumanization of our students and communities.

In considering how to continue to elevate the urgent need to address the racist underpinnings of American society, we must connect the dots between so many deeply troubling facets of our society. Please take a few moments to read our principles of racial justice: pft.org/principles. Our legislative platform is rooted in ensuring that our fight for equity and justices continues.

Priorities are identified by the applicable area of government:



City



State



Federal

SUPPORT: FACILITIES INVESTMENTS and OVERSIGHT

We need a robust effort and commitment from city, state, and federal elected officials to increase school infrastructure and facilities investments. All legislative bodies must work together to formulate a strategic plan to ensure facilities funding for our schools.

Further, at all levels of government, and within the School District, stringent oversight mechanisms must be developed and in partnership with unions and the community.



At the City level, we should eliminate corporate tax breaks and severely restrict the tax abatement. [Good Jobs First's recent nationwide report](#) shows that corporate tax breaks and abatements in Philadelphia cost more than \$112 Million in lost revenue for schools in 2019. This is--by \$40 Million--the largest loss for any school district in the nation.

We are in support of proposals to entirely eliminate the portion of the abatement that should be funding the District.



At the Commonwealth level, we are in full support of Governor Wolf's RCAP proposal, which would help facilitate more than \$1Billion in facilities investments across the Commonwealth.



Further, we urge the passage of legislation (bill numbers forthcoming) proposed by Representative Fiedler and Senator Hughes to bring urgent resources to invest in school facilities across the state.



At the Federal level it is imperative that the Senate act on the Infrastructure Bill, and that it include school facilities funding as outlined in the House Bill. The Rebuilding America's Schools Act must be part of any final infrastructure package.

Funding from the American Rescue Plan should be used, in part, to address some of these critical facilities needs.

SUPPORT: CHARTER SCHOOL REFORM



Coupled with the state legislative efforts, we urge a local moratorium on new charters and encourage discussion and action on all levels to ensure that charter school funding and oversight is thoroughly overhauled.



For too long, charter schools have operated under different criteria than traditional public schools. The oversight mechanisms are deeply flawed, and the funding inequities have systematically led to the siphoning of resources from traditional public schools. The different oversight and funding mechanisms are problematic. For example, charter school educators are exempt from the teacher evaluation system, and up to 25% of their teachers do not have to be certified.



For students with special needs, charter schools receive a set amount regardless of the student's individual needs. In traditional public schools, the funding is designated by the student's need classification. This leads charter schools to actively pursue recruitment of students with special needs that do not require significant interventions and to discourage enrollment of students whose needs are more costly.

OPPOSE: VOUCHERS (Ex: ESAs, EITC)



No matter the form, vouchers harm public schools. Whether in the form of EITC (Educational Improvement Tax Credit) expansion, ESA (Education Savings Accounts) creation, or any other mechanism, vouchers siphon money from traditional public schools without any fiscal, operational, administrative, or academic performance accountability or transparency.

Schools receiving EITC funding, despite being paid with taxpayer money, may (and do) refuse to enroll, or restrict enrollment of, students for virtually any reason, including religious affiliation, disability, discipline, or academic history.

Instead of working to identify ways that the legislature can live up to its constitutional obligation to fully and fairly fund public education, EITC and any form of vouchers sets the stage for another corporate giveaway and an inequitable distribution of resources. Tax breaks at the expense of our young people must be vehemently opposed.

SUPPORT: FUNDING MECHANISMS

This list of funding mechanisms is not exhaustive, but rather represents a sampling of legislative efforts that the PFT supports. These sources of funding are in addition to the funding sources outlined under facilities investments.

It is critical for city, state, and federal officials to work on a comprehensive plan to secure funding for public schools.



Restoration of the Charter School Line Item

When the Corbett administration eliminated the Charter School Reimbursement, public schools across the commonwealth lost \$224 million in funding from 2009-2010 alone. Philadelphia's share was \$109 million. Estimates for today balloon to \$300 million in lost revenue for public schools. (tinyurl.com/RFAreport)



Application of the Funding Formula to All Education Funding

Today, only 11% of Basic Education Funding runs through the formula. The formula is designed to ensure that children learning English, children with special needs, and students experiencing poverty, have access to the resources they need to thrive. We support the Governor's proposal to direct all funding through the weighted formula. This is an imperative step towards equity in education.

This funding will be critical in investing in some of the urgent needs of our students, including but not limited to the following:

- Addressing the school facilities crisis
- Increasing support personnel in schools
- Reduction of class size
- Improving access to services for students with special needs
- Improving access to services for English Language Learners
- Increasing number of school counselors
- Increased funding for and access to the arts
- Increasing access to social services in schools
- Increasing number of school nurses
- Increasing number of support staff
- Increasing recruitment and retention efforts of African American teachers and educators of color
- Expanding the community school model
- Increasing funding for and access to CTE programs
- Redeveloping/modifying curriculum mandates
- Increasing access to technology

SUPPORT: WORKERS' RIGHTS



We will be monitoring legislation to identify any anti-worker bills that are advancing, and we will vehemently oppose efforts to prevent workers from advocating for better working conditions. Further, we will continue advocating for fair and equitable contracts for educators and all of the labor movement.

Additionally, we will continue to support equity and justice in the form of various legislative efforts, including but not limited to legislation to raise the wage, legislation aimed at addressing racial and gender discrimination, and legislation providing more equitable access to health care.