



LEGISLATIVE POSITION MEMO

Philadelphia Federation of Teachers
Jerry T. Jordan, President

June 25, 2021

To: Members of the PA State Senate

From: Jerry Jordan

Re: Position on School Code Bill (SB381)

The PFT is deeply disappointed and concerned about the myriad failures in the current school code bill (SB381 A02135). This bill is, quite simply, shameful.

It's shameful in what it does, and it is shameful in what it does not do.

The bill does **nothing substantive** to increase education funding. We cannot and will not fall for the smoke and mirrors presented by this bill. While the legislation touts a \$200M expansion in basic education funding and a \$100M "level up" investment, this increase is **woefully inadequate** and **breathhtakingly immoral**.

In February, Governor Wolf proposed over a billion increase in basic education, and proposed moving all funding through the fair funding formula. *The \$200M (\$300M with the Level Up funding) increase is a drop in the bucket compared to this vision for full and equitable funding for public education.*

Further, the concept of a \$40 Million expansion in voucher funding (via EITC) is shameful. With a \$10 Billion surplus, **doing anything other than fully and fairly investing in our young people is simply unconscionable**. Instead of seeking ways to invest this once in a lifetime influx of funding into our schools, the legislature is concocting schemes that would serve as a boon for corporations looking to profit in the name of faux charity.

Let us not forget that the Commonwealth has a moral and constitutional obligation to provide every child with a thorough and efficient system of public education. And yet, this bill seeks to maintain the status quo--the status quo that perpetuates inequity and injustice every single day across the Commonwealth.

We cannot and will not support a bill that fails so profoundly to actually provide the resources that our students need and deserve.

The bill is equally shameful in what it does not do. There is a reckless failure to enact meaningful charter reform to rectify the years of inequity perpetuated by one of the worst charter school laws in the nation. Again, in crafting this bill, the **legislature has failed to address urgently needed issues in nearly every facet of public education**. This is clearly evident in the absence of any meaningful charter reform in SB381.

Further, this legislation extends the moratorium on PLANCON and evidences zero commitment to addressing the facilities crisis that affects students and educators across the Commonwealth every single day. Elected officials must commit to legislation that provides significant resources to remediate toxic conditions in our schools.

This bill, perhaps most significantly, **fails to require all funding to go through the fair funding formula**. This formula was reinstated in Governor Wolf's first term in office, and yet only 11% of overall education funding runs through the formula. This is **pitiful, immoral, and an absolute disgrace**. And yet, amidst a \$10 Billion surplus in Pennsylvania's coffers, the legislature has chosen to do exactly nothing to rectify this.

The reason there is a fair funding formula is because we know that there are so many factors that influence the resources that all of our children need to thrive. Students with special needs, students learning English, students experiencing

poverty will require additional resources to ensure that they have every opportunity afforded to them to reach their full potential. This should not be controversial. And it's exactly why the fair funding formula was reinstated. So for the legislature to again refuse to invest in our young people by moving all funding through the formula is unacceptable. **It is shameful that time and again, the deeply racist funding system that shortchanges predominantly Black and brown students, is continually perpetuated by the legislature's failure to act.**

I am disgusted by this attempted sleight of hand being floated as an actual investment in our schools and our young people.

I urge every elected official to **roundly reject this disgraceful piece of legislation** and instead work to **implement a real, meaningful investment agenda that our young people need, deserve, and to which they are constitutionally entitled.**