



Legislative position

The mission of the Pennsylvania School Boards Association is to promote excellence in public education and school board governance through leadership, service and advocacy.

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SUBJECT: Position Paper – Senate Bill 6 (Senator Lloyd Smucker)

DATE: June 15, 2015

PSBA POSITION ON Senate Bill 6

Establishment of the Achievement School District

PSBA Position: Oppose

On behalf of the 4,500 elected officials who govern the commonwealth’s public school districts, **we request your opposition to Senate Bill 6**, sponsored by Senator Lloyd Smucker. **PSBA strongly opposes Senate Bill 6. Not only does it entirely remove the elected school board from operational decisions of a district school, but it requires the district to pay the bill for charter tuition costs for resident students that are transferred to new privately-operated charter schools converted or created by the ASD.**

With no public input, the state-run ASD board will decide to take one or more of five required actions: 1) replacing the principal and at least half of the professional staff; 2) contracting with an education management service provider to operate the school; 3) convert the school to a charter school; 4) close the school and transfer the students elsewhere; and 5) authorize a new charter school. The ASD or the entity it contracts with may request a waiver from various state mandates. Simply put, public education under Senate Bill 6 is subject to the unilateral decisions of the ASD, yet the school district must still pay to implement those decisions *and* retain the teachers whose students have been moved into ASD schools.

Further, this legislation ensures that there will always be a list of “intervention” and “eligible” schools because it uses lowest-percentage rankings based on School Performance Profile (SPP) scores. In this scenario, even if all schools were to receive SPP scores above 70, there will be a bottom of the list. As the cycle continues, the number of schools under the jurisdiction of the ASD may include up to 75 at any one time.

These are just a few of the major problems with Senate Bill 6. We simply cannot allow our public schools to be absorbed one by one into an appointed statewide district. We appreciate your efforts to halt this legislation and instead come together with Chairman Smucker, PSBA and public school districts to create an innovative achievement solution that will work for Pennsylvania students, schools, and communities.

Summary:

Senate Bill 6 (Smucker): Amends the Public School Code to establish a state process for academically struggling schools (based on School Performance Profile Scores) to be transferred to a new statewide entity called the Achievement School District (ASD). The ASD will be led by an executive director who reports to a seven-member board comprised of appointees selected by the governor and leaders in the House and Senate.

Senate Bill 6 is based off of a failed education experiment implemented in Tennessee. PSBA contends that in Pennsylvania, we do not need a Tennessee solution, but rather a *Pennsylvania* solution for improving academic achievement. The association would welcome the opportunity to work with Sen. Smucker and the committee to create a viable solution that focuses on strategies, resources and supports to reform and improve poorly performing schools rather than tossing them aside for continued underperformance in favor of charter schools.