



March 28, 2017

The Honorable Senator
Senate Education Committee
Harrisburg, PA 17120

RE: Senate Bill 406, P.N. 403

Dear Senator:

The Pennsylvania School Boards Association and its 4,500 locally elected school boards have always supported local control and direction of school districts in Pennsylvania. We believe strongly that decisions that impact local tax payers need to be debated, discussed and vetted in their community and those votes that impact the millage rate of property tax payers are the most difficult votes taken. Legislation to require that millage tax increases be approved by a two-thirds majority vote of the members elected to the board of school directors, Senate Bill 406, is scheduled for a vote this Wednesday by the Senate Education Committee. PSBA asks that the legislature lead through example by first passing legislation that requires a two-thirds vote of the General Assembly to increase state-wide taxes, and to then extend that requirement to not just local school districts, but to all local governments with taxing authority in the commonwealth. It is our belief that this type of systematic change should apply to all taxing bodies in Pennsylvania, and that the legislature should lead the way since this change will require a constitutional amendment.

School directors do not take the taxing of their friends and neighbors lightly. That is why over the past seven years they have managed their budgets by decreasing staff salaries by over 4% and controlling nonmandated costs to a minimal increase of 5% over the same period. School districts have been dealing with extraordinary pressure from an over 257% mandated increase in pension payments and an over 40%



increase in mandated special education costs. Local decisions to guide school districts through these difficult budget pressures while considering the advancement of students are increasingly more difficult. The same pressures are true for the commonwealth and as they are applied to state-level decisions they should also be applied to local decisions as well.

In closing, we look forward to supporting the concept of this legislation after the passage of the constitutional amendment to implement the same standard for the General Assembly. Your comments and questions can be directed to PSBA Assistant Executive Director John Callahan, at (717) 506-2450, ext. 3337.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N. Mains', followed by a long horizontal flourish.

Nathan Mains
Executive Director