



2017-18 PSBA Legislative Victory Report



During the 2017-18 session of the General Assembly, PSBA worked to create support for the issues of greatest importance to local school officials, and to defeat those that were bad public policy.



THE WORK:

PSBA's legislative influencers dedicate every day to the work that allows our members to have a voice.

- Building relationships
- Shaping policy debates
- Offering legislative proposals
- Asking the right questions and negotiating effectively
- Providing the information to build support

During the 2017-18 legislative session, PSBA actively tracked more than 550 bills that were introduced in the Senate and House of Representatives.

WHAT'S INVOLVED:

- Critical discussions on proposals affecting public schools and students
- Meeting with legislators and staff
- Providing comments, analyses and testimonies on a variety of education issues
- Drafting proposals and amendments and negotiating for their inclusion in key bills
- Targeting three key campaigns: enactment of new graduation requirements, and blocking bills to create a new ESA voucher program and to restrict the ability of school districts to appeal property assessments.

The association also influenced discussions during the session with information from its State of Education reports. These comprehensive annual reports highlight the successes and challenges facing public education and include a vast array of statistics related to school finances, student achievement, budget and equity issues, and more.

INFORMING AND ENGAGING MEMBERS

PSBA kept members updated on legislative issues and bills moving in the General Assembly. We issued more than 70 *Legislative Reports* and over 45 *Legislative Alerts* and *Special Reports*. PSBA also assisted members in reaching out to their legislators and becoming engaged advocates for public education. More than 80 school officials and administrators joined us at the Capitol for Advocacy Day in 2017, growing to 150 in 2018. As we look ahead to the 2019-20 legislative session, we encourage members to join our network of advocates. Together we can build on our success.



PSBA WORKING FOR OUR MEMBERS IN THE 2017-18 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

FIGHTING FOR MORE STATE FUNDING FOR EDUCATION

PSBA advocated for continued and increased funding for public schools, including boosts in these key areas in the past two state budgets:

- Increase in basic education funding: \$200 million total, includes \$100 million increase each in 2017-18, 2018-19.
- Increase in special education funding: \$40 million total, includes \$25 million in 2017-18 and \$15 million in 2018-19.
- Career and technology education: level funded in 2017-18; \$10 million increase in 2018-19, marking the first increase in a decade.
- Increase in early intervention: \$34 million total, includes \$12 million in 2017-18 and \$22 million in 2018-19.
- School safety: \$70 million in 2018-19, with \$60 million for school safety initiatives plus \$10 million for school safety grants.

CREATING A BETTER APPROACH TO HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION

- Supported delays in effective dates for Keystone Exam graduation mandate (Act 55 of 2017, Act

39 of 2018) so that changes to the requirement could be developed.

- Led efforts to create comprehensive graduation reforms that were enacted for career and technical education concentrators (Act 6 of 2017) and for all students under four rigorous options (Act 158 of 2018) (PSBA key campaign).

FOCUSING ON SCHOOL SAFETY AND SECURITY

- Led efforts for comprehensive school safety legislation that includes, among other important provisions, creation of a flexible new grant program, creation of a statewide hotline to report incidents, and expansion of provisions for schools to receive free safety assessments (Act 44 of 2018).
- Led efforts to amend the School Code and the Sunshine Act to allow school boards to hold school safety and security discussions during executive session meetings (Act 39 of 2018, Act 156 of 2018).
- Supported expanded provisions for schools to conduct safety and security drills (Act 55 of 2017, Act 39 of 2018).
- Continuing to support efforts to promote student mental health screenings in a flexible manner.

FIGHTING NEW MANDATES AND HARMFUL PROPOSALS

PSBA opposed many harmful bills and successfully worked to block their passage. Some of the most significant include:

- Successfully fought a proposed \$50 million cut to pupil transportation funding in the 2017-18 budget.
- Senate Bill 2, Education

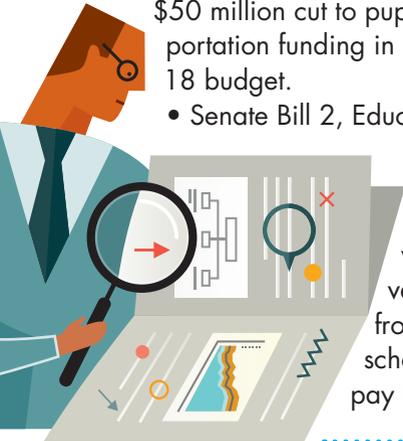
Savings Accounts (ESAs) would divert money from public schools to pay for private

schools and vendors (PSBA key campaign).

- House Bill 76/Senate Bill 76 proposed to eliminate property taxes and shift a significant burden of funding public schools onto other taxing mechanisms in a manner that would negatively impact districts.
- House Bill 97 created changes to the charter school law that did not address the meaningful reforms needed in the core areas of funding, accountability and governance.
- House Bill 638 would prohibit school director candidates from

being able to cross-file nomination petitions.

- House Bill 1213 would remove school districts' right to appeal property assessments, including those of undervalued commercial properties (PSBA key campaign).
- House Bill 1531 created inflexible rules for school boards in setting meeting agendas, effectively preventing school boards from acting on time-sensitive, personnel or emergency matters.
- Opposed proposed federal cuts to Medicaid that would jeopardize Pennsylvania's School-Based ACCESS Program.



WORKING FOR SCHOOLS, TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

- Continued ongoing work regarding the payment and process used by the state related to school district construction costs. Successfully fought for provisions in Act 25 of 2016 to issue bonds used to reimburse districts for over \$2 billion owed for construction costs approved under the Plan-Con process. As a member of the state Plan-Con Advisory Committee, PSBA helped to develop recommendations to be considered in the upcoming session for reforming the reimbursement process.
- Supported efforts to consolidate special education teaching certificates to address shortages and create hiring flexibility for schools and teachers (Act 82 of 2018).
- Supported efforts to lessen overly stringent vocational teacher certification requirements (Act 39 of 2018).
- Supported legislation regarding opioid awareness and prevention education (Act 55 of 2017).
- Supported provisions and further clarifications to prohibit "lunch shaming" of students who owe money (Act 55 of 2017, Act 39 of 2018).
- Supported expansion of the state's anti-hazing law to protect secondary school students (Act 80 of 2018).

INFLUENCING NECESSARY LEGISLATIVE FIXES

- Supported pension reform legislation that created a hybrid plan for school employees (Act 5 of 2017).
- Led efforts to clarify and correct inconsistencies in the 2016 truancy law as they relate to duties and compliance for nonpublic schools (Act 39 of 2018).
- Supported efforts as part of a coalition to make additional changes in the state workers' compensation law (Act 111 of 2018).
- Supported legislation providing for training of assessment appeal board members, updating the appeals process and notifications to property owners (Act 155 of 2018).

NEGOTIATING FOR FLEXIBILITY

PSBA successfully advocated for amendments in dozens of bills to reduce mandates, save school districts money, and make proposals fairer and more flexible. Among those that were signed into law: provisions for economic furloughs (Act 55 of 2017); new civics assessment requirements (Act 35 of 2018); use of sunscreen products in schools (Act 105 of 2018); and provisions for support services for students whose parent is deployed for active duty in the military (Act 119 of 2018). These are just a few examples of instances where PSBA was able to negotiate changes to legislative proposals.

