



January 7, 2022

House State Government Committee
Pennsylvania House of Representatives

Re: House Bill 2093

Dear Representative,

On behalf of the more than 5,000 school directors and administrators who govern the commonwealth's school districts, intermediate units, and career and technology centers, **the Pennsylvania School Boards Association (PSBA) is writing to express our opposition to House Bill 2093 and amendment 03287** scheduled for consideration by the House State Government Committee on January 10, 2022, at 8:00 a.m. House Bill 2093 would further elevate partisan party politics in public education by prohibiting school board candidates from cross-filing nomination petitions. Cross-filing is the ability allowed under the state Election Code for candidates of various elected positions to seek the nomination of more than one political party on the ballot.

Just this past October, PSBA members voted to uphold its position that the state should not prohibit candidates for school director to cross file. Their rationale was that cross-filing avoids politicizing public education and ensures that voters can vote for the best qualified candidate regardless of the candidate's political party status. We believe that the focus of your local school board should always be on providing quality public education to the students in your neighborhoods in a nonpartisan manner that best meets the needs of students and school district residents. School directors should put students and communities first without regard to political affiliation, and school board decisions should not be based on political party platforms.

Recently it has been difficult to find candidates to run for school board in various parts of the state and we do not expect it to become any easier. The position itself is not paid and places individuals in significantly contentious and stressful situations. Cross-filing requires voters to learn more about the specific issues at play in their district, instead of relying solely on party affiliation to make up their minds. Cross-filing also encourages candidates to interact and hear from a variety of voters who represent the diverse groups and viewpoints in a community.

Further, our preliminary research of other states has shown that most, if not all, other states in the nation have some system whereby school board candidates can either file for both parties or the electorate can vote for both parties. If House Bill 2093 was to be adopted, Pennsylvania would be the only state in the nation to not allow voters some open process to elect candidates

in the primary for school boards. Moreover, a recent poll conducted by Cygnal, Inc. of Washington D.C. on behalf of PSBA showed that 76% of Pennsylvanians do not believe that partisan politics in local school boards is a “good” thing.

Additionally, PSBA has reviewed proposed amendment A03287 which would only further politicize school board elections. The amendment makes additional changes to remove candidates’ ability to cross-file and makes changes to the process for filling vacancies on the school board that ignore the current process in Section 315 of the School Code, which already directs how vacancies are filled regardless of party affiliation.

Bringing politics into school board elections distracts from the real issue at hand – doing what’s best for our public school students and their communities. The education of our children is something that both Republicans and Democrats can get behind.