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Legislative Priorities 2023

DeKalb County School District Legislative Priorities

The DeKalb County Board of Education and Superintendent advocate for the following priorities for the 2023 Legislative Session. The DeKalb Legislative Delegation is requested to actively support each priority along with the Governor and the collective membership of the Georgia General Assembly.

Budgeting and Adequate Funding of the Quality Basic Education Act (QBE) Formula

DCSD supports initiatives that protect and stabilize the ability of school boards to generate funding for education, and that do not restrict the ability of school boards to direct those resources to students, as necessary. This substantive reform should begin with the establishment of an increased and fully funded weight for students identified as Economically Disadvantaged, much in the same manner that Students with Disabilities and English Language Learners also receive a substantive increase in assigned funding.

DCSD supports substantive reforms and revisions to the current QBE funding formula. Members of the General Assembly are urged to continue full funding of the state's funding formula for K-12 education. Any updates to the formula should be matched with proper funding to support the formula. State funding for education should be distributed based on the actual costs for providing services and resources such as transportation, media, textbooks, technology, and other equipment including extraordinary costs related to the COVID pandemic. Districts should be held harmless for any reductions in enrollment during the COVID pandemic. We also urge the General Assembly to reexamine and modify the equalization formula to reduce the burden on districts with high rates of students on free and reduced lunch.

School Safety and Security

DCSD urges the establishment of partnerships to devise a comprehensive strategy and attain the necessary training and resources to secure schools against a full range of risks.

Speed Cameras

DCSD urges the Legislature to pass legislation that ensures school districts must consent to speed camera installation and that any such legislation should also mandate that a major share of any funds collected must be used for improvements to school safety. The current speed camera law prevents school police from being the administrative agency for camera installations despite their having ticketing jurisdiction in a school zone.

Public School Employees Retirement System (PSERS)

DCSD urges that the State support a sustainable retirement program for employees under the Public School Employees Retirement System (PSERS), for the benefit of school district bus drivers and custodial, maintenance, and food service personnel. Therefore, state law shall require the funding of a defined pension that offers a guaranteed minimum retirement to all permanent employees not covered in the Georgia Teacher Retirement System (TRS).

Annexation and School Boundaries

DCSD urges the Legislature to pass legislation that separates municipal annexations from school annexations, requiring separate consideration and

votes for such school annexations, and limits or prohibits such annexations when they primarily involve commercial properties, or which otherwise disproportionately deprive a school district of current or future tax revenue when compared to the reduction of expenses to such school district. Any such legislation should further provide Districts the right to elect to retain buildings and properties otherwise subject to annexation and require compensation equal to the full replacement cost for any buildings or properties owned by a school district when such are annexed by an independent school district. State law shall require that county assessors must review comprehensively the assessed value of each commercial property no less frequently than once every three years.

Abatements and Other Tax Diversions

DCSD urges that school districts be granted representation on any development authorities which have the power to grant abatements or other diversions from school districts of school taxes and standing to object to any proposed abatements. Therefore, State law shall require that each development authority with the power to abate school taxes must have one representative appointed by a school district whose taxes are subject to abatement. Further, legislation should allow school districts to limit the amount of a reduction in any single abatement or similar action as well as impose an aggregate limit for all such abatements and similar actions.

Mental Health and Counseling Needs

DCSD urges the State to partner with local agencies to increase funding resources targeted to help identify and address the mental health needs of students and staff, and to assist in developing and implementing practical and appropriate mental health programs, trainings, and services. THE QBE allotment should include monies to promote mental wellness, identify and address chronic behavior, and provide data-driven services based on the needs of individual students. DCSD also urges the state to fund for counselors at a rate of one per 250 students and a mental health coordinator for each school district.

College & Career Readiness

DCSD supports increased funding for the college & career pipeline with a focus on creating more opportunities for work-based learning, expanding the career pathways, and expanding learning opportunities for educational enrichment and career exposure.

Early Childhood Education

DCSD urges legislation that increases funding allocated to school districts for Early Childhood Education with a focus on children in high needs communities. The goal of Early Childhood Education is to provide children with strategies that help them develop the emotional, social, and cognitive skills needed to become lifelong learners. For children in lower socioeconomic environments who are unable to access these programs, it can be challenging for them to enter a school system and thrive academically and emotionally.