

Michigan PTA 2023 Advocacy

Michigan PTA Takes Action Together to achieve the Education, Educational Success and Well-Being of Every Child.

The State Legislature, District and School Board teams, and educational professionals have the power to help ensure the educational success of all children and make every child's potential a reality in Michigan. Michigan PTA and our many members across the state advocate together, with one voice, to ensure that every child has access to a fair and equitable education in Michigan and across the United States.

That is why today, Michigan PTA is calling upon our Members of our State Legislature, school districts, and schools to:

- 1. Support Increased and Sustained School Funding.** Make needed investments in education, and find permanent replacements for temporary funding, to provide a safe environment and maximize education delivery for our children, teachers, and administrators across the state.
- 2. Support Seizure Safe Schools Legislation.** Pass Seizure Safe Schools legislation to ensure that schools are well-equipped with the tools necessary to provide a safe and enriching environment for students living with epilepsy and seizure disorders.
- 3. Support Gun Violence Prevention Legislation.** Firearms are the leading cause of death of children and youth in the United States. Michigan PTA is asking our Michigan legislators to continue their commitment to safe and supportive schools by working toward both prevention and treatment for all students.
- 4. Support Mental Health & Wellness Legislation.** Foster inclusive school cultures, support mental health and wellness, and provide resources regarding suicide prevention.

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1. Support Increased and Sustained School Funding. Make needed investments in education, and find permanent replacements for temporary funding, to provide a safe environment and maximize education delivery for our children, teachers, and administrators across the state.

From 1995 to 2015, Michigan had the lowest education revenue growth of all 50 states. Michigan PTA appreciates that in recent years funding for our schools has improved. This includes one-time education-related COVID Relief Legislation and increases to the State Foundation Allowance. However, children, families, educators, and public schools are still facing numerous critical and immediate needs, which must be addressed with additional Michigan funding for resources for Michigan children. As the COVID Relief Funding expires, schools across Michigan must have support to address the continued safety of children, the trauma of the pandemic and the myriad of instructional issues, including the effects of learning loss and the digital divide. We need to continue improving funding and the investments in our children's future.

Michigan PTA is asking our Michigan legislators to:

- 1. PROTECT THE SCHOOL AID FUND - changes to state tax policy that impact the School Aid Fund and local revenues must create no negative tax revenue changes for the districts.**
- 2. Support funding to help students reach their full academic potential through an expansion of existing payments for literacy grants and literacy coaches, funding to schools for additional curriculum and professional development, supporting new math intervention programs, supporting discretionary tutoring dollars to schools through the [MI Kids Back on Track](#) program, and continuing funding for before- and after-school programs.**
- 3. Support funding to help students thrive by providing universally free breakfast and lunch, improving student physical and mental health, and improving school safety.**
- 4. Support funding to recruit, retain, and develop teachers, to recognize the crucial role high-quality teachers play in the success of their students.**
- 5. Support funding of universal pre-K and the expansion of early childhood programs to improve future academic and life outcomes.**
- 6. Support funding for support of students with disabilities.**
- 7. Support funding for the MI Climate Plan/Healthy Schools Grant Program for mitigation of health and safety issues in schools.**
- 8. Support funding for the modernization of school transportation vehicles through matching grants to school districts for purchasing buses powered with electric motors.**

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2: Support Seizure Safe Schools Legislation. Michigan PTA is asking our Michigan legislators to pass Seizure Safe Schools legislation to ensure that schools are well-equipped with the tools necessary to provide a safe and enriching environment for students living with epilepsy and seizure disorders.

The legislation makes certain that school personnel, including nurses, teachers, and volunteers, are not only prepared but can recognize and respond appropriately and efficiently to a student experiencing a seizure. Even more importantly, it safeguards physician-directed care in the school setting, allowing students to access necessary and oftentimes life-saving medication. Lastly, by bringing awareness to the entire educational community, students living with epilepsy or a seizure disorder can feel safe in school, reach their full academic potential, and build meaningful friendships without fear of being stigmatized.

Epilepsy is a disease or disorder of the brain which causes reoccurring seizures. There are many different types of seizures and varying levels of seizure control. Epilepsy is the fourth most common neurological disorder in the country. Approximately 1 in 26 people will develop epilepsy at some point in their lifetime.

At least 13,600 children are living with epilepsy in Michigan. Compared with students with other health concerns, students aged 6–17 years with epilepsy are more likely to miss 11 or more days of school a year. Michigan ranks 48th out of 50 states with a ratio of 4,204 students per school nurse. And only 17.2% of lead health education teachers in Michigan secondary schools receive professional development on epilepsy or seizures.

Michigan PTA supports the Seizure Safe Schools Legislation which has four components:

- **School personnel are required to complete a seizure recognition and first-aid response training.**
- **Mandates that a Seizure Action Plan is made part of the student's file and made available for school personnel and volunteers responsible for the student.**
- **Ensures that any FDA-approved medication prescribed by the treating physician is administered to the student living with epilepsy.**
- **Includes a Good Samaritan clause (which offers limited protection to someone who attempts to help a person in distress).**

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3. Support Gun Violence Prevention Legislation and Funding. Firearms are the leading cause of death of children and youth in the United States. Michigan PTA is asking our Michigan legislators to continue their commitment to Safe and Supportive Schools through legislation and funding, addressing prevention and treatment for all students.

All students and educators have a right to safety, yet schools are experiencing increasingly frequent incidents that are having a devastating, long-term impact on students, parents, educators, and the community. A founding principle of the PTA's mission is to promote the safety and well-being of all children and youth. School safety is a critical priority for all parents, educators, students, and community members which cannot be taken for granted. Students and educators have a right to attend schools that are safe and conducive to learning and achievement, yet schools often experience critical incidents such as suicide, natural disasters, or mass casualty events which have devastating impacts. Michigan PTA encourages bipartisan dialogue to develop preventative measures to reduce gun violence in our homes, our schools, and our communities.

Michigan PTA is asking our Michigan legislators to:

- 1. Support Gun Violence Prevention bill packages (HB 4138-4148/SB 76-86) which include universal background checks, extreme risk protection order (red flag), and secure storage, which would require owners to properly secure firearms and make them inaccessible to minors in their home, to prevent injury or death.**
- 2. Support Domestic Violence Relinquishment legislation which prohibits those convicted of domestic abuse from accessing firearms.**
- 3. Support Governor's proposed budget item of \$1.9 million to implement gun violence prevention policies.**
- 4. Support Governor's proposed budget item of \$10.8 million to establish the Office of Community Violence Intervention Services to partner with community-based organizations already working to reduce violent incidents.**
- 5. Support Governor's proposed budget item of \$5 million to enact various recommendations from the Task Force on Juvenile Justice Reform, including creating a Juvenile Justice Services Division within the State Court Administrative Office and expanding the scope of the Office of the Children's Advocate.**

Together, we can give our children support by providing them safety - the safety of a secure firearm; the safety of trained teachers; the safety of support personnel. Michigan PTA and National PTA continue to support all efforts for safe schools in anti-bullying, building resources, cybersecurity, district support, emergency planning, mental health, and public health. Children who feel safe and secure, who feel seen and heard, are better able to meet learning standards, do well in school and be prepared for college, trade school and beyond.

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4. Support Mental Health & Wellness Legislation. Foster inclusive school cultures, support mental health and wellness, and provide resources regarding suicide prevention.

According to the Michigan Parents' Council 2022 Report to the Governor, 84% of parents reported that student mental health is important or very important to them. Parents reported an increased focus on student mental health, sharing that schools are implementing mental health curriculum, and students have more access to supports like calming rooms, therapy animals, and increased physical activity. Some schools have partnered with local community mental health agencies to integrate services within schools, and schools are addressing bullying and conflict more consistently.

Parents agreed that schools can do even more to support students' mental health needs, explaining that there is a significant shortage of school- and community-based mental health providers, caregivers and parents are not aware of how to access resources in their school, and parents are unsure of how schools are using funding to support mental health.

The parent perspective aligns with the third goal in the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) strategic plan, which seeks to "Improve the health, safety, and wellness of all learners" and will be measured by the following metrics:

- Number of students who received school mental health and support services
- Percent of students who have been bullied on school property in the past 12 months
- Percent of students who felt sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row during the past 12 months
- Percent of students who seriously considered attempting suicide during the past 12 months

Michigan PTA is asking our Michigan legislators to:

- 1. Support the Governor's budget which continues to support student mental health, physical health, and safety.**
- 2. Continue working with the MDE to develop standards for educators to recognize mental health needs and training on how to refer students for help, including services for anxiety and depression.**
- 3. Support bills (SB27-29) to mandate mental health coverage, end 'chemical restraint,' and allow excused mental health absences for students.**
- 4. Support legislation to work toward licensed mental health professionals in every high school.**
- 5. Increase screenings and expand specialized services for students with moderate and severe mental health needs.**
- 6. Support broader access to training and school-based programming regarding suicide prevention.**

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