



November 20, 2020
Office of Management and Budget

Delaware PTA understands that currently School Based Wellness Centers are funded through tobacco settlement money via the Health Fund Advisory Committee (HFAC). We know that these funds are not a permanent funding solution. All programs which receive funding from this source will need to begin to look elsewhere as this settlement money decreases over time.

Delaware PTA requests that a permanent funding solution be identified for School Based Wellness Centers. Long before COVID-19, Delaware PTA advocated for these centers and services. We know the value of these centers. Both Delaware PTA and National PTA understand that school based health care is necessary, especially for our most vulnerable populations who often do not have access to general practitioners and other healthcare providers. While school based wellness centers are useful for on site health care and sports evaluations for students, we also know these centers provide critical services needed for wraparound care for students in poverty. Delaware PTA supports these services because we know that if students are not healthy, they cannot learn. The services of Delaware's school based wellness centers are so important, especially for our youngest children in new elementary school based wellness centers.

Delaware PTA is extremely pleased with recent legislation limiting access to tobacco for those 21 and under. However, reductions in tobacco use and tobacco settlement funds should not affect funding for school based wellness centers. COVID-19 has underscored the importance of accessible health care for Delaware's most vulnerable students. Funding for school based wellness centers should not be a pass through cost and we request a permanent solution.

Sarah Bucic

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To: Mike Jackson, OMB Director and Susan Bunting, Delaware Secretary of Education
CC: Mary Nash Wilson, OMB and Cerron Cade, Department of Labor/ OMB Director nominee
From: [Education Equity Delaware Steering Committee](#)
Date: Friday, November 20, 2020
RE: FY22 State Budget regarding education funding lawsuit settlement

We are writing specifically in regards to the proposed settlement in the school funding lawsuit between Delaware and the NAACP of Delaware and Delawareans for Educational Opportunity that will require legislative action this session.

While we are supportive of more money for students with high needs, and recognize this settlement would provide much-needed resources to the students who need it most, this is just the floor. We want to make clear that it does not change how the underlying system allocates funding, and we should go further to address the structural inequities in Delaware's public education system.

The heart of our [long-term vision](#) is **fixing the underlying unit system**. Transitioning to a more flexible system where dollars follow students will improve transparency, equity, efficiency, and create the conditions needed to leverage all our education investments to target the needs of students and impact student learning. Advocates have been fighting for decades for this structural change. Much more is needed to achieve our long-term vision. While this settlement changes the playing field, it represents the “a new floor” and we should go further to also:

- **Begin transitioning from Delaware's "unit count" system**, which is inherently inequitable since it follows staff units and not students. Most states have moved away from a unit count system for better flexibility, transparency, and responsiveness to students.
- **Provide additional flexibility to the underlying system.** \$60 million of flexible Opportunity Funding for student needs is still less than 5% of the total \$1.6 billion state education budget, which is mostly locked in restrictive units.
- **Approach the magnitude of recommended student-funding weights recommended by experts.** Maryland, for example, spends 99% more per English learner. Most of our neighboring states follow the recommendations of [national education finance experts](#), who say states should aim for weights of 50-200% per-child. This proposed funding would take Delaware's number to 6-9% weight.
- **Help accelerate pre-K expansion.** In five years, Delaware will remain in the bottom of quartile of states in pre-K access, and will fund less than 10% of the state's preschool-age children.

Doing so will catalyze larger, systemic changes that numerous local and national research studies and best practice show are necessary to improve outcomes for students. Thank you very much for your continued prioritization of this very important issue. As a group of organizations committed to excellent and equitable education opportunities for all Delaware students—we believe the underpinning of an equitable education is the funding system. We recognize the enormous opportunity in front of us this session and look forward to working with you and legislators.

