



INDIANA SCHOOL BOARDS
ASSOCIATION

Working Together – Let's Advocate for Public Schools

2024 Advocacy Guide
7th Edition

Presented by the
Indiana School Boards Association

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Foreword

School boards in every school corporation in Indiana are charged with the awesome responsibility of making decisions to ensure that the schools are well-managed and budgets are balanced. The quality of education for the more than 1 million students who attend Indiana public schools is largely dependent on how well those decisions are made. Undoubtedly, decisions made by the Indiana General Assembly also significantly impact school corporation governance.

Typically, more than 100 -150 bills are introduced each session impacting K-12 education — with a few dozen or more bills becoming law every year. That is why it is crucial that school board members – now more than ever before – become active and engaged advocates for K-12 public education.

Why Is My Advocacy So Important?

- Because you have firsthand understanding of your school corporation's needs and what is necessary to provide a quality education.
- Because you must deal with the complexities of balancing your local budgets annually.
- Especially now, at a time when social and political challenges confront K-12 public education more than ever before, your voice representing the best interests of Hoosier students must be heard.
- You have an important message to deliver to your state senators and representatives, the media, and your local community.
- You have the clout to inform and influence the development of sound K-12 education policy both in Indianapolis and our nation's capital, Washington, D.C.

Can I Really Make A Difference?

- Absolutely!
- As school board members, you are in an excellent position to inform and influence the legislative process.
- You, like them, are public servants and hold positions of influence in your community.
- You deal with a variety of issues at the local level on an ongoing basis and are an informed source of information about education policy.
- Legislators listen to their constituents back home. You're on the front lines of education and can explain the impact of state-level policy decisions.
- The impact local school leaders can have in the policy-making process is why the Indiana School Boards Association strongly encourages our members to deliver advocacy messages to the legislature.
- ISBA has established a grassroots program, the Legislative Action Network, to keep local school leaders informed and ready to advocate.

“Big 8” Action Checklist

1. Get Informed
2. Identify Your Legislators
3. Contact Your Legislators
4. Share Your Story and Information
5. Invite and Involve the Community
6. Advocate Effectively
7. Come to the Statehouse
8. Follow-up with ISBA

Get Informed

The first step in effective advocacy is to get informed. It is important that you, as an advocate, understand the issues and are comfortable with your knowledge of them. For ease of access, the ISBA 2024 Legislative Priorities and Foundational Statements are in Appendix A of this guide.

Thorough preparation will make you a more confident and successful advocate. There are many resources available to help you build your knowledge base. A starting point can be the Legislative Services page of the ISBA website (www.isba-ind.org/legislative-services.html), where you will find a wealth of information:

- ISBA's Legislative Positions & Priorities
- Bill tracking list of K-12 legislation
- Weekly legislative updates
- How a bill becomes law

The Indiana General Assembly website (iga.in.gov) also provides valuable information:

- Watch legislative hearings and floor action live (or archived)
- Find votes on bills
- Review bill amendments
- Access the session calendar and deadlines
- Research the fiscal impact statements on bills

Identify Your Legislators

You can find your legislators and their contact information by entering your home address on the Indiana General Assembly website at <https://iga.in.gov/legislative/find-legislators/>

State Senator

Name:

District Number:

Phone:

Email:

Address:

State Representative

Name:

District Number:

Phone:

Email:

Address:

Contact Your Legislators

By regularly contacting your legislators and developing a relationship with them, you will be able to assist them in making well-informed decisions regarding education. You can use e-mail, write letters, notecards, or make telephone calls. Contact your legislators prior to the legislative session to introduce yourself and begin to develop a relationship.

For contact during the interim:

- Give your name, title, and the name of the school board on which you serve.
- Don't be surprised if you have to schedule a time to speak with the legislator; remember, most legislators have full-time jobs during the interim.
- Focus your conversation on one or two top priorities, remembering that your immediate goal is to introduce yourself and offer yourself as a resource for the legislator on education issues.
- Share stories about the successes of your school corporation.
- Share the "local perspective" on the impact of state legislation.

For contact during the legislative session:

- Ask to speak with the senator or representative but be prepared to discuss your issue with a legislative assistant.
- Give your name, title, and the name of the school board on which you serve.

- Focus your call on ONE issue or bill and, if possible, identify the bill by number; briefly state what position you want the legislator to take and be prepared to offer your rationale based on local impact.
- Always ask what position your legislator will be taking on the bill or issue.
- Share with the ISBA staff what you learned about legislators' positions on issues.

If wanting to call the State House to leave a request for your state representative or senator to vote for or against a bill, you can call the State House call center:

- Indiana House of Representatives: 800-382-9842
- Indiana Senate: 800-382-9467

Share Your Story and Information

The next step in effective advocacy is to share the information you have gained with your board, your neighbors, and your community. No one is more qualified than you to talk about your school corporation and what is going on within it.

- Formalize legislative advocacy on your board by creating a standing agenda item for legislative updates during the session. Use this time to update your board and, by extension, your community on issues of legislative importance. Report on your contacts with legislators.
- Work with other local elected officials on common issues.
- Ask to speak to civic and community groups on issues of importance to education. As a school board member, you are a community leader, and you can have great influence on your community's attitudes.
- Use local media to advocate for public education. Talk to the local newspaper's education reporter to help her or him understand what is happening in your school corporation and with educational programs and services in general. Meet with the editorial board to share a vision of the vital role public education plays in your community. Strong relationships with local media representatives mean they know they can rely on you as a resource for education stories.
- Finally, write a guest opinion editorial for the newspaper to convey your message to a broader audience.

Invite and Involve the Community

One effective local activity is arranging opportunities for your school to be highlighted as the center of your community. It is important that we continue to introduce ourselves to our public, including our legislative leaders.

- Invite your legislators and members of the public to visit your schools or to events that highlight successful programs in your district. Arrange for legislators to tour one or more schools to showcase your district's achievements and successes. Be sure to call or e-mail media representatives in advance and promptly thank your legislators for coming to the school.
- Host legislative forums in your community or with other school corporations in your county. Invite all of your senators and representatives to a discussion about K-12 education policy and school funding. During the session Thursday evenings, or Friday or Saturday mornings would work best for when they are back home in their districts.
- One of the hardest activities -- but potentially the most effective, is building and activating a local coalition focused on public education. You can form a coalition with stakeholder groups in your community. By engaging these stakeholders in the process, you will build understanding and goodwill.

Come to Indianapolis

Culminate your advocacy efforts and help ensure a successful legislative session for issues affecting public education, by visiting Indianapolis and meeting with your legislators.

ISBA will also inform you of opportunities to lend your voice and local expertise to testify on bills in the House and Senate Education Committees. Stay tuned for email blasts in this regard from ISBA during the 2024 session.

Attend the **Sixth Annual ISBA State House Day** on February 6, 2024, at the Hyatt Regency Indianapolis. This event typically includes a briefing session, legislative panels, a luncheon, and State House office visits. More information will be sent to you about this as it is available.

If you cannot attend this event, schedule another time for board members and administration to travel to Indianapolis to meet with your legislators and push for sustained investment in education.

Follow Up with ISBA

Let us know how your conversations go with your legislators!

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“Top 10” Tips of Effective Lobbying

Tip 1

Research your legislators’ backgrounds, committee assignments and voting records on education issues. Their personal biographies can be found on the House and Senate Caucus pages on Indiana General Assembly website at: iga.in.gov. Click on House or Senate and then Republican or Democrat to find the bios on your legislators. Learn whether their children or grandchildren attend your schools, as this will establish common ground for support of public education.

Tip 2

Develop relationships with your legislators by routinely visiting, writing and calling; let them know you are a constituent. Take notes about them to assist you with future conversations with them. You should know your legislators and they should know you. We are all on the same team focused on kids and should be working together.

Tip 3

Don’t overdo your lobbying. Be brief and know what you are talking about. Use ISBA talking points. Clearly and quickly explain your opposition or support for the issue you are contacting them about.

Tip 4

Show respect. Be positive. Remember to thank legislators for pro-public education votes and support of the ISBA legislative priorities. Conclude each communication with an expression of gratitude for their time.

Tip 5

Lobby with your real-life experience. It's your most persuasive tool; use local examples.

Tip 6

Set priorities. If everything is important, nothing is important. Know your 'ask' and focus your conversation around it.

Tip 7

Shore up lobbying allies from your community to demonstrate broad support; collaborate with others.

Tip 8

Don't forget the media. Getting your message out to the press – letters-to-the editor, news releases, etc. – can influence your legislators and public opinion.

Tip 9

Be sensitive to partisan politics, but always try to come across as nonpartisan. In politics, there are no permanent allies and no permanent adversaries.

Tip 10

Be reasonable and consider compromise on contentious issues. Remember there are typically more than 1,000 bills that are introduced each session, and everyone thinks their issues are most important —so many people and issues vie for the attention of legislators. Sometimes, simply informing legislators on your position will pay long-term dividends whether you immediately change their position or not.

A Checklist of Communication Tips

- ✓ When calling, ask to speak with the legislator directly, or briefly state your position to the person taking the message.
- ✓ Know local needs and impact of legislation on your school district.
- ✓ Speak up; be heard on issues of concern to you. Your actions and inactions count.
- ✓ Know your issues. Check ISBA's bill tracking list and weekly legislative updates on a frequent basis during the session to keep abreast of legislative news.
- ✓ Follow through with any information promised.
- ✓ Be honest in your approach.
- ✓ Identify and utilize common interest/ issues/activities.
- ✓ Your knowledge of issues and the legislative process produces credibility with your legislator; your credibility dictates your legislator's level of response.
- ✓ Be direct.
 - Make specific requests.
 - Get specific commitments.
 - Follow up: Hold a legislator accountable for his/her commitments.
- ✓ Make yourself a contact point for your legislator within your district.
- ✓ Send hand-written thank you notes or follow-up messages to reiterate key advocacy or discussion points.

Writing Letters-to-the-Editor and Opinion Editorials

Letters-to-the-editor and opinion editorials written by readers (called op-eds) are useful ways to speak out on an issue, respond to an article or editorial, or express your position in your own words. They often are read by members of the Indiana General Assembly and can do double-time as a lobbying tool, as they influence the broader community. Even a letter or op-ed that does not get published is valuable because it may be considered by a newspaper's editorial board reviewing an issue and it may cause the paper to write a story on the topic.

Hints for effective letters-to-the-editor and op-eds:

- Be brief and focus on one issue. If the piece is too long, the newspaper may edit out important facts. To get an idea of how long is too long, take a look at your newspaper's opinions page and count the words in an average letter-to-the-editor. The average op-ed is usually longer than a letter-to-the-editor and is between 450 and 500 words.
- For a letter-to-the-editor, refer to a recent event or an article which has appeared in the newspaper and include the article's date and title.
- When applicable, close your letter or op-ed by asking readers to contact their members of the General Assembly or other policymakers about the issue.
- Give your address, school district and phone number so the newspaper can verify authorship.
- Send your published letter-to-the-editor or op-ed to your legislators.

State Offices

Indiana State Governor

Eric Holcomb

State House

200 W. Washington Street, Room 206

Indianapolis, IN 46204

Lieutenant Governor of Indiana

Suzanne Crouch

State House

200 W. Washington Street, Room 333

Indianapolis, IN 46204

Secretary of Education

Dr. Katie Jenner

State House

200 W. Washington Street, Room 229

Indianapolis, IN 46204

The Honorable (insert name of State Representative)

State Representative, District (insert number)

Indiana House of Representatives

State House

200 W. Washington Street

Indianapolis, IN 46204

The salutation of your letter should read, "Dear Representative (insert last name)."

The Honorable (insert name of State Senator)

State Senator, District (insert number)

Indiana State Senate

State House

200 W. Washington Street

Indianapolis, IN 46204

The salutation of your letter should read, "Dear Senator (insert last name)."

Map of State House

Maps are courtesy of the [Indiana General Assembly](#).

First Floor:

A. Committee Rooms

1. 101
2. 124
3. 125
4. 128

B. Restrooms

1. Men's
2. Women's

C. Wheelchair Accessible

Entrances

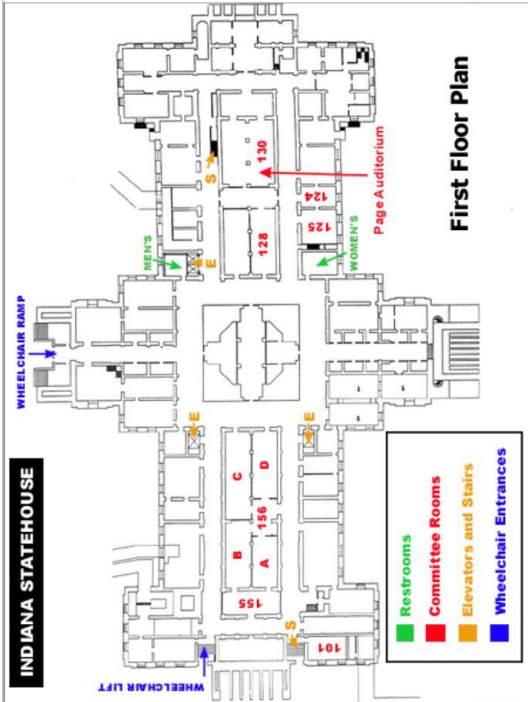
1. Ramp
2. Lift

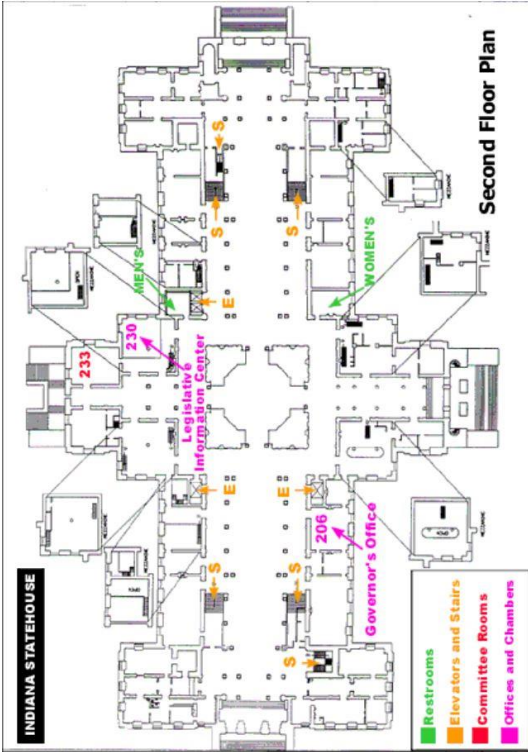
D. Elevators and Stairs

1. Elevators
2. Stairs

E. Page Auditorium

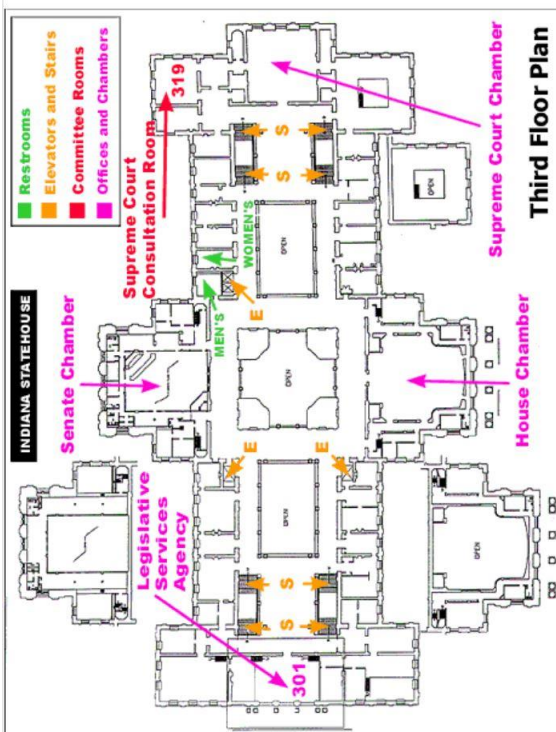
1. 130





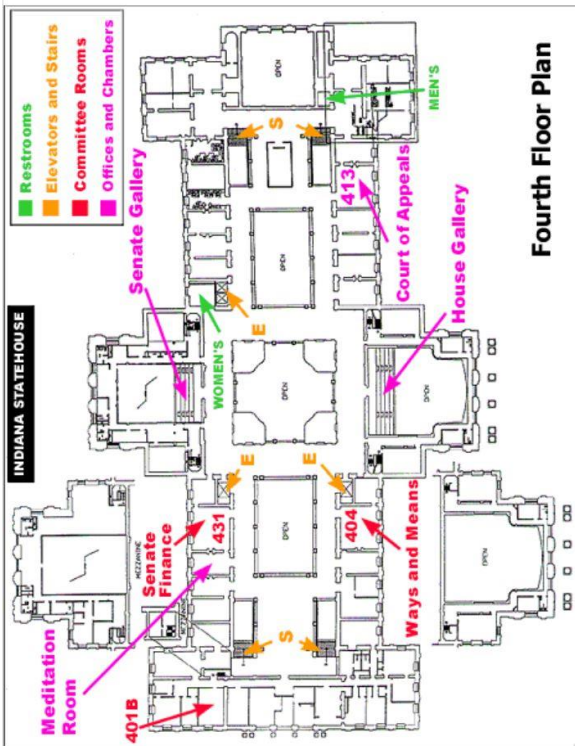
Second Floor:

- A. Committee Rooms
 - 1. 233
- B. Restrooms
 - 1. Men's
 - 2. Women's
- C. Offices and Chambers
 - 1. Governor's Office
 - 2. Legislative Information Center
- D. Elevators and Stairs
 - 1. Elevators
 - 2. Stairs



Third Floor:

- A. Committee Rooms
 - 1. Supreme Court Consultation Room- 319
- B. Restrooms
 - 1. Men's
 - 2. Women's
- C. Offices and Chambers
 - 1. Senate Chamber
 - 2. House Chamber
 - 3. Supreme Court Chamber
 - 4. Legislative Services Agency
- D. Elevators and Stairs
 - 1. Elevators
 - 2. Stairs



Fourth Floor:

A. Committee Rooms

1. 401B
2. Ways and Means-404

B. Restrooms

1. Men's
2. Women's

C. Offices and Chambers

1. Senate Gallery
2. House Gallery
3. Court of Appeals
4. Meditation Room

D. Elevators and Stairs

1. Elevators
2. Stairs

Fourth Floor Plan

Appendix A

Legislative Priorities and Foundational Statements

2024 Legislative Priorities

1. Teacher Retention and Student Support Services Grant Program

ISBA supports the creation of a new **Teacher Retention & Student Support Services Grant Program** to address ongoing challenges faced with teacher retention and shortages in critical student support services areas. Dedicated funding for trained health and support service professionals would ease the burden of classroom teachers. The funding will support staff trained and certified in needed areas of student care. This support will lead to higher teacher retention and better student academic, social, and behavioral outcomes. Comprehensive mental and behavioral health services in schools improve students' ability to learn.

According to the American School Counselors Association, Indiana has the highest student to academic counselor ratio of 694:1. The preferred ratio is 250:1. More counselors are needed to help guide high school graduation pathways, including work-based learning, apprenticeship, and internship opportunities for students in the workplace. (Source: <https://www.schoolcounselor.org/getmedia/b9d453e7-7c45-4ef7-bf90-16f1f3cbab94/Ratios-21-22-Alpha.pdf>)

The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) recommends a ratio of 1 school psychologist per every 500 students. The current ratio in Indiana is 1 to 1,502, approximately 3 times the recommended ratio. <https://www.nasponline.org/about-school-psychology/state-shortages-data-dashboard>

In a joint statement, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) declared a national emergency in child and adolescent mental and behavioral health in October of 2021. This declaration remains in effect and includes several recommendations, including: “Increase implementation and sustainable funding of effective models of school-based mental health care, including clinical strategies and models for payment.” (Source: [AAP Declaration](#)). One in five students suffers from a mental health disorder and roughly 80% of children and youth who are in need of mental health services do not receive them. Furthermore, 70–80% of students who do receive mental health services receive them in school.

This grant proposal was developed and supported during the 2023 budget session of the state legislature by ISBA, IASBO, IAPSS, the Indiana School Counselors Association, and the Indiana Association of School Psychologists. The following unfunded state grant programs addressing student support services would be streamlined into this new grant program: **School Intervention and Career Counseling Development Program and Fund (IC 20-20-17); Elementary School Counselors, Social Workers, and School Psychologists Program and Fund (IC 20-20-18); and Grants for Mental Health Counselor Licenses for School Counselors (IC 20-20-18.5)**. While the essence of the three grant programs to be consolidated under this proposal address real needs of students and staffing needs of school corporations, these grant programs have either never, or not recently, been funded by the state.

This program would be administered by the Indiana Department of Education with allowable uses of the grant funds to include:

- Teacher mentor stipends of \$1,500 for support of first- and second-year teachers
- Teacher and support services retention bonuses/stipends (after 3, 5, and 10 years of service when returning to the school in fall semester of next school year)
- Flexibility to use funds for Teacher Advancement Programs or teacher residency programs to retain highly qualified teachers with higher pay and scheduling flexibility to coach other teachers during the school day
- Hiring additional support service professionals through use of funds for salary (career coaches, school counselors, school psychologists, social workers, therapists, nurses)
- Recruitment grants (housing allowance, moving stipend, 1-time hiring bonus, grow-your-own programs, etc.)

2. TIF Taxing Matters

ISBA supports the suitable and reasonable use of Tax Increment Financing (TIF) as a fiscal policy tool for community economic development with appropriate guidelines for redevelopment commissions. It is important that the original assessment, whether the property is taxable or not, is used for the calculation of the AV base for a TIF area to ensure all appropriate taxes flow to the respective taxing entities, including schools. If a proposed TIF property is not taxable at the time of the allocation area being established, ISBA proposes that the taxes that would have been paid as pre-developed land be included in the base AV to determine property tax levy distributions to local units of government.

3. Referendum Issues

A. Clarify Referendum Tax Rate Information

HEA 1271 (Public Law 38-2021) revised the local public question for Controlled Projects, Operations, and school safety referenda of school corporations to include the “estimated average percentage of property tax increase” on residential and business property. This new language replaced the prior long-standing language that provided the proposed property tax rate increase per \$100 assessed valuation to the property taxpayer. This new language is ambiguous and could misinform a taxpayer who would pay significantly less, or more, than the average percentage of property tax increase the school corporation will receive. ISBA supports changing the ballot language to include the property tax to be paid annually by voters/residents for an average value (median) residence in that community and what the property tax paid annually would be for a business property per \$100,000 of net assessed value.

B. Add Capital Referendum (Controlled Project) Net Tax Rate Ballot Language

ISBA proposes allowing school corporations to adjust the referendum ballot question to include a net estimated average percentage of property tax increase that the school corporation will receive after deducting any retirement of debt scheduled during the lifespan of an approved referendum. Inclusion of this information on the ballot will provide a more accurate depiction of the long-term cost impact of the proposed referendum on taxpayers/voters.

4. Education Regulatory Relief Measures

A. Repeal Ineffective Public Hearing Requirements

i. Repeal Mandatory Hearing on Proposed Superintendent Contract

The mandatory public hearing on the proposed contract of a (new) superintendent creates a difficult situation for the candidate in terms of the timing of disclosure to their current board and corporation. It makes the process and timing of moving forward with a search for the board losing a superintendent much more difficult if not impossible depending on the time of the year a search is completed. It is also an issue of transparency since it unnecessarily delays an announcement of a new superintendent and often leads to speculation and questions on the part of the community. It delays the process of transitioning to new leadership which could be a hindrance for the board, incoming superintendent, and overall operation of the school corporation.

ii. Repeal Mandatory Hearing on CBA

ISBA supports the repeal of the mandatory public hearing before the start of bargaining (IC 20-29-6-1). The public is not a party to the collective bargaining agreement and is not familiar with the bargaining process and/or the subjects of bargaining. Most school boards and superintendents advise that patrons rarely attend or testify at this hearing. The public has the opportunity to give input on the tentative agreement reached by the school board and the teachers' association before the board votes on

the agreement. Additionally, the public has access to the bargained agreement since current law requires the agreement to be posted on the school corporation's website.

B. Repeal School Improvement Plans (IC 20-31-5)

The annual school improvement plan has become obsolete and should be repealed to focus on student achievement progress illustrated in the new Indiana Graduates Prepared to Succeed Data Dashboard system. The improvement plans take a considerable amount of time and effort on behalf of the school leadership team and must follow an extensive list of components prescribed by IDOE. Schools do not receive feedback or approval from IDOE after submission. Time invested at the school building level for this perfunctory compliance reporting could be used for more meaningful school improvement activities within schools.

C. Repeal Primetime Program (IC 20-43-9)

While once a very meaningful program with significant funds tied to it, the Primetime Program is no longer funded or included in the state's tuition support formula and, thus, school corporations do not receive monies for this purpose (class size reduction). School corporations are accountable to the stakeholders within their communities regarding desirable class-size ratios.

D. Streamline Reporting for School Corporations

House Enrolled Act 1638 (Public Law 250-2023) requires the Indiana Department of Education to report to the legislature recommendations for reducing the amount of

redundant data schools must report. ISBA will lend support to these recommendations generally speaking to ask the Indiana General Assembly to help streamline excessive data and compliance reporting required by state agencies.

E. Delay in Hiring New Superintendent Post General Election

ISBA believes that school boards should have restored authority to negotiate a contract to hire a new superintendent, without a temporary moratorium following the general election. It would be helpful and efficient for boards to have local control flexibility to move forward the superintendent contract and have their new person in place more easily before a spring semester if a mid-school year hire is necessary to fill a vacancy in the role.

5. Various Education Matters

A. Curricular Materials

ISBA seeks clarification on permissible fees that may be assessed to parents for the delivery of educational services and extracurricular activities for students. With the elimination of the textbook rental fee system and move to state-funded curricular materials reimbursement, some expenses such as consumable materials (lab fees, gym uniforms, workbooks possessed by students, musical instruments, etc.) and co-curricular fees (textbooks, exams/certifications, and college credit) have school boards concerned about significant funding shortfalls. ISBA calls for an explicit list of permissible fees

that enable continued charges for these types of expenses.

B. Open Door Law Pertaining to Committees

Following the Public Access Counselor's recent advisory opinions on public notice requirements for committees created by superintendents or principals, the Open Door Law should be amended to clarify that committees not created by a board need not comply with these requirements.

C. Stop Arm Violation Fine and Penalty Enforcement

Enhanced efforts are needed to enforce school bus stop arm violation penalties and fines to better protect students in school bus zones. Legislation introduced in the 2021 and 2022 sessions proposed that a registered owner of a motor vehicle commits an infraction if the owner's vehicle is used to violate the school bus stop arm law. Passage of this legislation would lessen the burden of proof to identify the driver of the vehicle.

D. Modify 1% Alternate Diploma Limit

Indiana law limits the percentage of students with disabilities who receive an alternate diploma that count toward a high school graduation rate to one percent (1%) of students in a cohort. This limitation unfairly penalizes school corporations with small graduating classes. ISBA supports modifying this requirement to 1 percent or three students, whichever is greater.

2024 Legislative Foundational Statements

The Indiana School Boards Association (ISBA) is dedicated to improving the quality of public education and school governance throughout the state of Indiana. ISBA recognizes the role of the General Assembly in enacting legislation that impacts public education and is committed to representing the interests of its member school corporations when addressing legislative initiatives. ISBA has adopted the following foundational statements to formalize its position as it advocates on behalf of Indiana school boards, public education, and students on present and future legislation.

Support Exceptional Learning Opportunities for Hoosier Children

The ISBA supports programs and policies to provide exceptional learning opportunities for Hoosier children. Given that approximately 92 percent of all K-12 students attend a public school, the families of more than 1 million students have spoken and have made public schools the “schools of choice.” We believe that through local control, we have created a rich and diverse public education system that provides a multitude of learning environments, programs, and curricular offerings to students. Through these opportunities we prepare a new generation of students to be college and career ready, helping drive the economic growth and prosperity of the state.

Promote Equitable Funding of Public Schools

The ISBA supports the funding of public schools that is annually adjusted to keep ahead of inflation and that improves Indiana’s national rankings on per pupil funding and teacher compensation. This allows local boards of education to support the ongoing improvement in the quality of public education and ensure adequate resources to address the learning needs of all children. ISBA supports the equitable funding of public schools, recognizing that schools may need additional funding to educate

economically disadvantaged students and students with unique educational needs.

Empower School Board Authority

The ISBA supports empowering local boards of education with the authority to govern the educational and financial matters, including health and safety measures, for students and employees of school corporations. In addition, the ISBA supports maintaining the authority to make changes to local reorganization plans, including consolidation and disannexation of school corporations, with school boards and the voters who reside within the particular school corporations affected.

Engage and Involve Families

The ISBA believes that family involvement results in stronger schools and better student outcomes. School boards continually strive to create opportunities for parents and stakeholders to be heard, including through participation on local curriculum review and development committees. Parents/stakeholders should continue to have a process or opportunity for input through the classroom teacher, principal, superintendent, and finally the school board. Ultimately, the establishment of student achievement goals and curriculum review and approval rest with the school board, who are elected or appointed representatives of the school community.

Maintain Safe and Supportive Classrooms

The ISBA believes that every child deserves a safe and secure learning environment. ISBA supports local control—with state support, broad policy, and appropriate funding—to implement comprehensive school safety plans informed by a threat assessment and developed in collaboration with local law enforcement and public safety agencies. ISBA opposes funded or unfunded mandates for implementation of specific school safety equipment, devices, or technology. Policies and funding pertaining to school safety should be holistic and include addressing the social and emotional needs of students and staff,

including resources for guidance counselors, social workers, school psychologists, and mental health therapists to support student and staff wellness.

Promote High-Quality Teachers and School Leaders

The ISBA believes that effective educational achievement outcomes depend on a high-quality teacher and administrator workforce. We support legislation that respects and values the teaching profession vital to the success of public schools. We support state policies and laws that enable “teachers to teach” without burdensome regulation or policies that diminish or demean the profession. ISBA seeks support for teacher recruitment strategies that both address critical shortage areas and attract a pipeline of diverse teacher candidates into the classroom, such as promising “Grow Your Own” partnerships between schools and postsecondary institutions and state pre-service teacher scholarship programs to attract more minority teachers to better reflect Indiana’s student population. ISBA is a proponent of initiatives that improve the retention of excellent educators, including enhanced support for mentoring and leadership development.

Support Professional Development

The ISBA supports professional development opportunities that provide dedicated time for training and mentoring that enhance and elevate the teaching profession. We support state funding for professional development and in-service programs. ISBA also supports enhanced teacher training on e-learning instruction strategies that reflect best practice and proven methodologies to engage students in a virtual environment.

Seek Rigorous and Consistent Financial and Academic Outcome Measures for All Schools

ISBA believes that the best approach to tracking the academic progress and effectiveness of our schools is through public transparency and availability of multiple academic outcome measures. The metrics used to grade school corporations and

individual schools should be transparent and easy to understand. ISBA supports the use of multiple measures in the GPS Data Dashboard to judge the quality of schools to reduce the over-reliance on summative assessment scores.

Regardless of which metrics are used to judge the quality of schools, all schools (public, public charter, and private) receiving state tuition support dollars should adhere to the same academic and financial accountability metrics. The public has a right to expect transparency and compliance with the public notice requirements, record keeping and audits needed for financial accountability, and access to public records from all state-funded schools. Whether an audit is conducted by the State Board of Accounts (SBOA) or by a contracted accounting firm, all audits should be submitted to the SBOA and made publicly available through the state's Gateway system. In addition, any school or school system receiving state tuition support should post an annual budget accessible to the public and have a public hearing on the budget before adoption. Dollars flowing to each school system type should be itemized separately in the state budget. Taxpayers deserve full transparency regarding how their tax dollars are spent on these programs.

ISBA recognizes and commends the efforts of public schools to fulfill the unique constitutional duty to educate every child.

Maintain Nonpartisan School Boards

The ISBA supports the continuation of the election and/or appointment of school board members on a nonpartisan basis. Nonpartisan elections help ensure that voters choose school board members based on their qualifications, experience, and vision for addressing local educational needs, instead of their party label. School board members are entrusted with deciding what is in the best interest of students in their community. The focus of a school board member should remain on the child. Introducing political party affiliation may cause school boards to feel conflicted with where their allegiances and priorities lie.

Protect School Calendar/Instructional Time

The ISBA supports the legislative mandate to conduct a minimum of 180 student instructional days and believes the local governing body should retain the authority to determine the school calendar. The ISBA supports giving increased flexibility to school boards to determine the length of the instructional day for professional development and student achievement benefits. The ISBA supports the flexibility to use virtual instruction when deemed appropriate by school officials.

Support Career and Technical Education (CTE)

ISBA believes career and technical education (CTE) should enable students to complete a postsecondary credential during high school or move toward gainful employment upon graduation. All students should have the opportunity to engage in career exploration with support from highly qualified and professionally trained educators and through access to meaningful work-based learning, internships, or modern youth apprenticeships. Secondary CTE courses should expand focus from filling short-term needs of business and industry that are entry-level and low-wage basic jobs to creating career pathways that lead to transferable skills and certifications to foster life-long learning. Policymakers and state agency leaders should support fiscal and administrative policies to incentivize cooperation between school corporations and employers, as well as to help with the purchase of new equipment, curricular resources and materials, the cost of all credentialing exams, and student transportation.

Expand K-12 Tax Credit Programs

The ISBA supports an income tax credit for charitable contributions to public education foundations. In addition, ISBA supports a tax deduction for parents of public school students for educational expenses, including educational materials not paid for by the school corporation through the state curricular materials reimbursement fund.

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