



INDIANA SCHOOL BOARDS  
ASSOCIATION

Working Together –  
Let's ADVOCATE for  
Public Schools.

**2023 Advocacy Guide**

Presented by the  
Indiana School Boards Association

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## Acknowledgements

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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 educate and influence the legislative process.
- You, like them, are elected officials 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 7” 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. Come to Indianapolis
7. 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 2023 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.html](http://www.isba-ind.org/legislative.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’s website ([www.iga.in.gov](http://www.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, or make telephone calls. Contact your legislators prior to the legislative session to introduce yourself and begin to develop a relationship.

When you call 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.

When you call 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 2023 session.

Attend the **Fifth Annual ISBA State House Day** on February 21, 2023 at the Indianapolis Downtown Marriott. This event typically includes a briefing session, legislative panel, 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: [www.iga.in.gov](http://www.iga.in.gov). Click on House or Senate and then Republican or Democrat to then 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.

## **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. When 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 Quick 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.

# 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, too, to build support for pro-K-12 education legislation. Concentrate on writing letters-to-the-editor or op-eds for your local newspaper since that will have the greatest impact on legislators. 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 article is too long, the newspaper may edit out some 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 that 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 State of Indiana**

#### **Diego Morales**

State House  
200 W. Washington Street, Room 201  
Indianapolis, IN 46204

### **Indiana Attorney General**

#### **Todd Rokita**

Indiana Government Center South  
302 W. Washington St., 5th Floor  
Indianapolis, IN 46204

### **Secretary of Education**

#### **Dr. Katie Jenner**

Indiana Government Center North, 9<sup>th</sup> Floor  
100 N Senate Ave  
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)

State House

200 W. Washington Street

Indianapolis, IN 46204

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

**The Honorable (insert U.S. Senator’s name)**

Senate Office Building

Washington, D.C. 20515

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

**The Honorable (insert U.S. Representative’s name)**

House of Representatives

Washington, D.C. 20515

The salutation of your letter should read, “Dear Congressman/woman (insert last name).”

## **The President**

The White House

Washington, D.C. 20500

The salutation of your letter should read, “Dear Mr. or Madame President.”

# Map of State House

Maps are courtesy of the [Indiana General Assembly](https://www.in.gov/legislative/).

**First Floor:**

A. Committee Rooms

1. 101
2. 124
3. 125
4. 128
5. 155
6. 156A
7. 156B
8. 156C
9. 156D

B. Restrooms

1. Men's
2. Women's

C. Wheelchair Accessible Entrances

1. Ramp
2. Lift

D. Elevators and Stairs

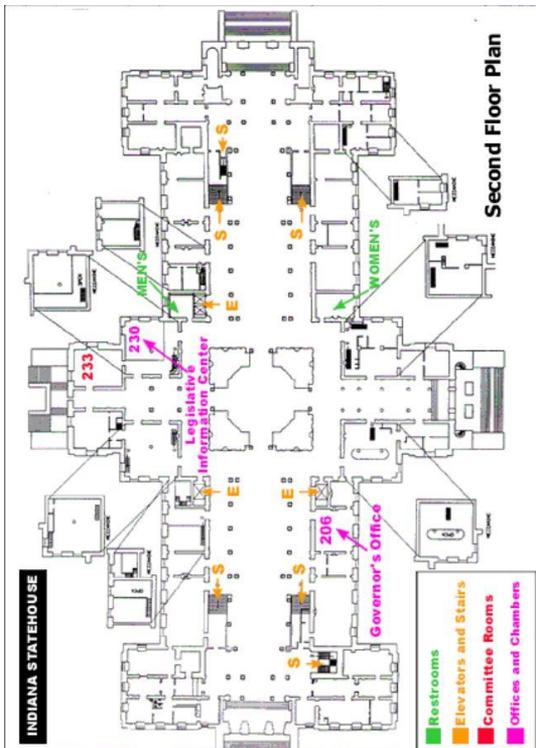
1. Elevators
2. Stairs

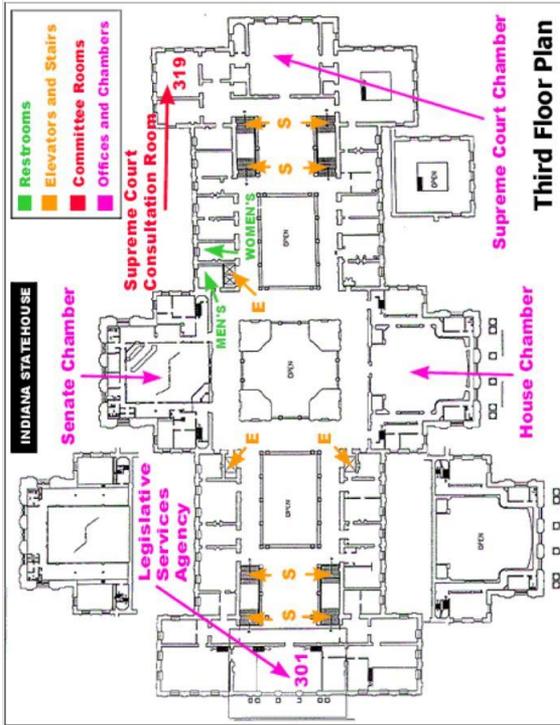
E. Page Auditorium

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
3. Senate Finance-431

### B. Restrooms

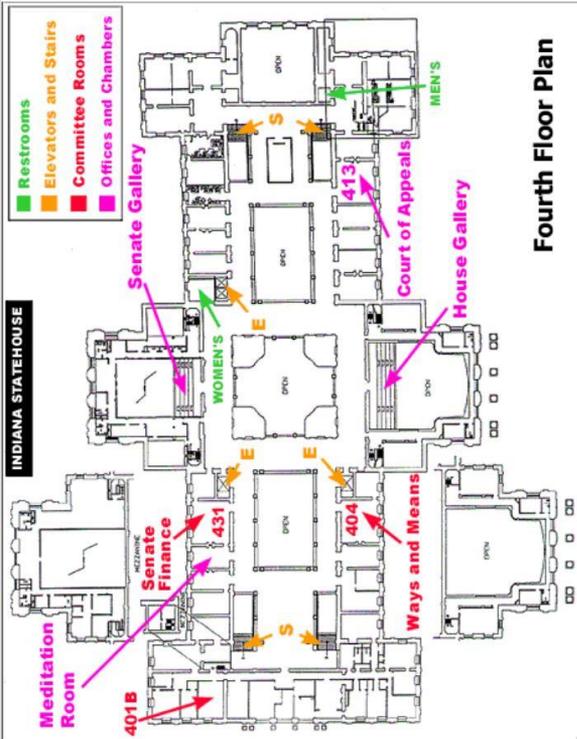
1. Men's
2. Women's

### 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

# 2023 Legislative Priorities

## 1. State Budget/Tuition Support

Economic conditions are stretching resources and increasing budgetary challenges for school corporations. The cost of classroom instruction and business operations are escalating. Consider:

- ✓ The purchasing power of state tuition support is being eroded by inflation. The CPI is currently hovering around 9%, which is at a 40-year high. As a result, school officials are reporting price escalations for goods, equipment, and services
- ✓ Funding required to restore inflation-adjusted purchasing power would be \$500 million in FY 2022 and \$800 million in FY 2023 (Dr. Larry DeBoer, Professor Emeritus, Purdue University, June 15, 2022)
- ✓ Staffing shortages are interfering with schools' ability to deliver optimal education, transportation, cafeteria, and other critical services to students
- ✓ The ability to generate tax dollars is being diminished by rising homestead values that trigger an increase in circuit breaker credits
- **The 2023-2025 school funding priorities of ISBA include:**
  - **Tuition Support**
    - i. An annual increase in Tuition Support at a percentage matching or surpassing the rate of inflation. The Indiana General Assembly is asked to continue its recent significant effort (during the 2019-2021 and 2021-2023 biennia) to boost state tuition support to help fund increases in teacher compensation and classroom operational expenses
  - **Prekindergarten Program Expansion**

- i. Modify program eligibility based on the child’s family household income from 185% to up to 300% of the federal poverty level. ISBA supports increasing state funding for the On My Way Pre-K grant program to accommodate this change with the goal to significantly expand opportunities for early childhood learning and supports that meet rigorous PATHS to Quality standards
- ii. According to 2021 research conducted by the Center for Early Learning at Purdue University, On My Way Pre-K children performed better than comparison children on general school readiness skills, such as identifying shapes, colors and numbers and language and literacy skills in kindergarten. The On My Way Pre-K students also tended to have higher performance on ILEARN English/Language Arts tests than the comparison children in grades 3 and 4. (See study summary at:  
<https://www.in.gov/fssa/carefinder/files/OMWPK-2-Study-Summary-Report-0122.pdf>)

- **Complexity Index**

- i. Increase Complexity Index funding to support school corporations, both rural and urban, that have high concentrations of students living in poverty. The Complexity Index is sound in principle, but an insufficient amount of money has been included in the formula in recent years to be impactful in “leveling the playing field” to close achievement gaps.

- **English Language Learners (ELL)**

- i. ELL categorical grant dollars increased by \$5 million to \$27.5 million annually in current biennial budget and ISBA calls for another \$5 million increase annually during the 2023-2025 biennium
- **Special Education Categorical Funding**
  - i. Special education funding increased significantly for severe, moderate, and preschool categories by 5% in FY '22 and 10% in FY '23. ISBA supports an additional increase of comparable amounts for these categories in the next budget
- **Teacher Mentor Stipends**
  - i. ISBA calls for the re-establishment of a state grant program that existed for many years prior to 2010 that supported teachers entering the profession and provided master teachers with a stipend for their mentorship of the new teachers. Approximately 3,000 first-year, full-time teachers are hired in Indiana each year. Providing 3,000 mentor teachers with a \$1,000 annual stipend would cost the state \$3 million per year
- **Attaining Teacher Pay Goals**
  - i. Inclusion of all collective bargaining unit members and all employee costs (benefits, FICA, social security, pension) in the teacher compensation requirement (45% threshold)
  - ii. Add any school corporation expenditures for salary and wages for the employment of adjunct teachers in the teacher compensation requirement (45% threshold)
- **ADM Count for Early Graduates**

- i. Count all seniors, even those graduating after the fall semester, in the spring ADM count (this language was included in HB 1204 during the 2021 session). This policy will ensure school corporations are not penalized for the notable achievement of seniors who want to start college or careers early by graduating after the fall semester. Under current law, school corporations are not provided with adequate flexibility to reduce personnel and operating costs mid-year

## **2. Indiana Secured Schools Safety Grant**

ISBA supports a significant appropriation increase from \$19 million to \$30 million annually for this grant program. This increase will offset funding shortfalls of unfunded requests in the 2022 grant award cycle. Ensuring safe, secure, and supportive classroom learning environments has escalated in urgency and priority given the rash of tragic school shootings across the nation. Since establishment in 2013, the Indiana Secured School Safety Grant (SSSG) Program has served as a critical resource to help ensure Hoosier schools are safe and secure. This increased funding will also help provide additional resources for student and parent supports to enable school corporations to hire additional school counselors, social workers, school psychologists, and therapists.

## **3. Student Mental Health Support Services**

ISBA supports dedicated state funding for student social, emotional, and behavioral services. As reported in an U.S. Census Bureau survey and cited in the 2021 Indiana Kids

Count Data Book published by the Indiana Youth Institute (IYI), the onset of COVID-19 increased children and youth having anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and distress due to social isolation and economic conditions. In addition, the IYI report cites that nearly 13% of Hoosier youth cope with severe major depression. Suicide ideation has increased as well according to various reports. These circumstances are troubling and require time and attention from classroom teachers to support their students' emotional wellbeing, lessening time devoted to teaching and learning. Dedicated funding for trained mental health professionals would ease the burden of classroom teachers. The funding will support a staff that is trained and certified in those areas of student care. These supports will lead to higher teacher retention and better student academic, social, and behavioral outcomes.

#### **4. Referendum Issues**

##### **A. Clarifying 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. 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. Adding Capital Referendum (Controlled Project) Net Tax Rate Ballot Language**

ISBA proposes allowing school corporations to adjust the referendum ballot question to include a net average on a resident and business after deducting any retirement of debt scheduled during the lifespan of an approved referendum. Due to the cost of the project, the net tax rate impact is an additional piece of information needed so that taxpayers/voters can understand the long-term cost impact to them. Inclusion of this information on the ballot will provide a more accurate depiction of the tax rates and levies of the school corporation.

**5. 15% Education Fund Transfer Limit 1-Yr “Hold Harmless” Waiver**

ISBA supports a 1-year hold-harmless waiver to be granted through the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) for excess fund transfers by school corporations from the Education Fund to the Operations Fund above the target threshold not to exceed 15%. This waiver would address inflation spikes and the significant increases in transportation expenses (school bus pricing and fuel costs). No waiver process is available presently in IC 20-40-2. The school corporation reports the amount transferred to the IDOE. The IDOE must post each school corporation’s report.

**6. Reviewing Local Government Financing Matters**

ISBA supports a review of local government finance matters by the legislature to consider changing the maximum levy growth quotient (MLGQ) to adjust for circuit breaker tax cap

losses. In addition, ISBA would support eliminating Controlled Project thresholds to move to a maximum referendum property tax rate mechanism. In addition, ISBA supports continued analysis of the financial impact of TIF districts on other units of government, including school corporations.

#### **7. Eliminating A-F School Accountability Grades and Replacing with Data Dashboard System**

ISBA supports eliminating the current state A-F accountability system and favors the use of the new data dashboard system as a means of accountability to provide the public with multiple measures, including opportunity gap indicators, beyond test scores for which to judge the quality of all schools that receive state tuition support. Given the four consecutive years of “hold harmless” provisions in use of ILEARN test scores to compute accountability grades, this system has become obsolete and has diminished credibility and importance with stakeholders.

#### **8. Medicaid Reimbursements for School-based Health Services**

ISBA supports continued efforts through legislation to expand school-based health services that are eligible for Medicaid reimbursement.

- Presently, school psychologists with independent practice endorsements (IPEs) can bill Medicaid but only for services provided under the supervision of a physician or an HSPP (Health Service Provider in Psychology). IDOE issues the IPEs once the additional requirements to obtain the IPE are met. School psychologists with IPEs under the supervision of a physician or an HSPP would be considered a qualified health professional, but only the services they

provide per a special education student's IEP (individualized education program) would be reimbursable, the salaries would not be

- While a current Medicaid provision provides for school psychologists to bill for testing, the barriers of providing proof of meeting Medicaid qualified practitioner criteria are often a hindrance for schools
- ISBA supports the Indiana School Psychologists Association proposal to either authorize school psychologists to direct bill without the necessity of oversight and signature from a physician or HSPP psychologist, or serve as the signing authority for school-based psychological services

### **9. 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.

### **10. School Board Member Per Diem Procedure**

Current law allows school board members to receive up to \$2,000 a year for their service as well as a per diem for attending board meetings. The maximum per diem rate for all school board members in the state is established by the Board of School Trustees of the Indianapolis Public Schools, whose determination is restricted by the rates established by the Indianapolis City-County Council. Having per diem rates for school board meetings tied to the per diem rates for city-

county council meetings is flawed since the governmental entities operate differently. The ISBA proposes to authorize the Indiana State Board of Education to set the maximum per diem rate for all school board members in every school corporation.

# **2023 Legislative Foundational Statements**

The Indiana School Boards Association (ISBA) is dedicated to improving the quality of education provided by public schools 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 and public education 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 94 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 ranking on per pupil funding. This allows local boards of education to support the ongoing improvement in the quality of public education. 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, 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 as an honorable, noble profession. 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. 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 evaluation, 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.

### **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. Introducing political party affiliation may cause school boards to feel conflicted with where their allegiances lie.

### **Protect School Calendar/Instructional Time**

The ISBA supports the current 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 the current flexibility to adjust the beginning and closing hour of the school day due to student safety concerns and student achievement benefits. The ISBA supports the flexibility to use virtual instruction when deemed appropriate by school officials.

### **Seek Rigorous Financial and Academic Accountability Measures for All Schools**

The metrics used to grade school corporations and individual schools should be transparent and easy to understand. ISBA supports the use of multiple measures to judge the quality of schools to reduce the over-reliance on summative assessment scores.

Regardless of which metrics are used for the school accountability system, all schools (public 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. 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. The ISBA supports requiring all schools that receive state tuition support funding to admit students on a nondiscriminatory basis.

**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 curricular material fees.

**Support Career and Technical Education (CTE)**

ISBA believes career and technical education (CTE) should enable students to move directly into employment upon graduation and/or complete a postsecondary credential more quickly. All students should have the opportunity to engage in career exploration. 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.

# Notes

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