

SCPTA Legislative Platform, adopted April 16, 2016

A core purpose of PTA is to secure adequate laws for the care and protection of children and youth. In keeping with SCPTA's mission and core purpose, fully funding public education is our legislative priority. Accordingly, the SCPTA hereby resolves to urge the General Assembly to: support state funding of K-12 education at levels required by South Carolina law.

In South Carolina, the state government is required to ensure that every school system has sufficient funding to provide every child with the opportunity for free public school education, as defined by the South Carolina Constitution and state law. Local governments also provide funds, but the state is required to make sure the total amount of funding is adequate. SCPTA encourages and supports initiatives at all levels of government—local, state and federal—to assure that every school system has sufficient funding to provide every child with an equal opportunity for access to a quality education. That includes sufficient funding for qualified teachers in all classrooms and skilled administrators in all schools.

SCPTA urges our state legislature to fully fund state laws that support public education including, but not limited to, the Education Finance Act of 1977, teacher compensation, and the 2007 law requiring a 15-year school bus replacement cycle.

I. We ask the General Assembly to fully fund the EFA.

The Education Finance Act (EFA), passed by the legislature in 1977, established a per pupil amount of state funding for school districts. The amount, called the “base student cost” (BSC), was based on a 1975 model of what it would cost to provide an adequate education for a student. Under EFA for each subsequent year the base student cost amount increases based on the rate of inflation.

For most of the last decade, the state has funded the base student cost far below the amount required under the Education Finance Act. The state has not fully funded the base student cost since 2007-08. For the last six years, BSC has been funded at less than 80%. For the 2016-17 school year, the House has proposed funding the BSC at \$2,350, an increase of \$130 per pupil but less than what is required under the EFA (\$2,800).

II. We ask the General Assembly to raise South Carolina teacher salaries to the national average and to establish a salary structure that would be appropriate considering differentiated responsibilities so as to compensate teacher leaders in relation to skills and performance.

The base student cost is the primary source of funding to pay teachers. Salaries are important for attracting, developing, and retaining a top-notch teaching force in each zip code. However, over the last decade, the national buying power of teacher salaries has declined. In the state's quest to improve student achievement, we must not overlook the importance of qualified, effective teachers in every classroom. If South Carolina is serious about raising student achievement, then a salary structure must be developed that is

competitive with neighboring states and will allow us to hire and retain qualified teachers. A plan to compensate teachers on a differentiated scale according to responsibilities, skills and performance will allow districts to keep master teachers and teacher leaders in the classroom.

III. We ask the General Assembly to provide funding to replace our public school buses after fifteen years.

South Carolina is the only state that provides the buses for their school districts. A law passed by the state legislature in 2007 calls for a 15-year bus replacement cycle: Approximately one-fifteenth of the school bus fleet is to be replaced each year with new school buses resulting in a complete replacement of the fleet every fifteen years.

The state is not meeting the requirements of this law. The last year the state appropriated funding to meet the 15-year replacement cycle was in 2008.