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## **Maryland PTA Legislative Platform 2007**

***“To secure adequate laws for the care and protection of children and youth”***

### **The Mission of the PTA is threefold:**

- To support and speak on behalf of children and youth in the schools, in the community, and before government bodies and other organizations that make decisions affecting children;
- To assist parents in developing the skills they need to raise and protect their children; and
- To encourage parent and public involvement in the public schools of this nation

### **National PTA Purposes:**

- To promote the welfare of children and youth in home, school, community and place of worship
- To raise the standards of home life
- To secure adequate laws for the care and protection of children and youth
- To bring into closer relation the home and the school, that parents and teachers may cooperate intelligently in the education of children and youth
- To develop between educators and the general public such united efforts as will secure for all children and youth the highest advantages in physical, mental, social and spiritual education

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## **Maryland PTA Legislative Platform 2007**

### ***“To secure adequate laws for the care and protection of children and youth”***

***The authority of Maryland PTA’s legislative activity*** is the third object of the National PTA’s Purposes. Maryland PTA recognizes that an organization dedicated to the welfare of children and youth must concern itself with the laws that effect children.

***The Maryland PTA Legislative Platform***, adopted by state convention delegates, establishes the authority, direction and priority for action on legislative issues, and in accordance to National PTAs Purposes and Basic Policies. All directives contained in the platform are derived from state resolutions, position statements or policy statements. Maryland PTA believes all levels of government play varying roles in ensuring that the health and welfare needs of all children and youth are met.

#### **STATE FOCUS:**

***Maryland PTA supports the Bridge to Excellence Act of 2002 as its state legislative priority.*** Maryland PTA supported the adoption of the Bridge to Excellence Act (Thornton) in 2002 to ensure that all students benefit from adequate educational resources; that each school system receives an equitable share of state funding; and that school systems are held accountable for individual student achievement. The Act calls for significant increases in state funding for public schools through 2008.

We must assure that the upcoming fiscal budget includes the proposed funding levels. Full funding is needed to ensure that all students benefit from high quality teachers and programs designed to meet Maryland’s high student performance standards. Full funding will enable schools to provide much needed improvements such as; reducing class sizes, eliminating achievement gaps; providing quality music, art, career technology, gifted & talented programs; providing full-day kindergarten, and pre-kindergarten programs to build the foundation for future learning.

***Maryland PTA and all of its members supports funding the Public Schools Facilities Act of 2004*** that was signed by the governor on May 11, 2004. We need \$3.85 billion dollars to bring all schools up to the minimum standard for educational programming, health, and safety requirements as recommended by the task force to study public school facilities. A safe, healthy, and modern learning environment is essential to raising academic performance, especially as we strive to meet the rigorous standards set forth in the No Child Left Behind Act and Bridge to Excellence Act.

*(Source: MDPTA 2004-2005 Post Card Campaign)*

Maryland PTA will encourage the Governor of Maryland and the General Assembly to consider all available revenue options to support Maryland’s public schools and other essential children’s programs.

#### **FEDERAL FOCUS:**

***Maryland PTA supports*** many provisions of the ESEA, No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), and IDEA Act as its federal legislative priority. Maryland PTA also supports the requirement for healthy, high-performance school buildings in which the design, construction, operation, and maintenance use energy-efficient and affordable practices and materials; are cost-effective; enhance indoor air quality; and protect and conserve water.

***Maryland PTA also supports*** additional funding for school modernization and new construction projects nationwide. Maryland PTA will work with the White House, Congress, and other educational organizations to enact federal legislation to help states and schools renovate and repair their facilities. Maryland PTA will work with National PTA and with officials at all levels of government to find innovative ways to fund school construction projects

## **The 2006 Maryland PTA Legislative Policies focus on the following:**

### **Parent/Family Involvement**

**Maryland PTA supports** measures that reflect its National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs in education and child-related legislation and regulations including:

- Parent/family involvement in federal/state/local legislation
- Employee release time for parent/family and community involvement
- School-linked parent resource centers
- Established policies that support and respect family responsibilities, recognizing the variety of parenting traditions and practices within the community's cultural and religious diversity.
- Provide an accessible parent/family information and resource center to support parents and families with training, resources, and other services
- Diversity awareness programs to encourage parent involvement

### **Public Education**

**Maryland PTA supports** comprehensive school reforms that unite parents/guardians, school staff and community members in designing and implementing education improvements that meet local needs:

- Support State and Federal education programs and funding initiatives that:
  - Support equity
  - Provide adequate levels of funding
  - Provide adequate textbooks for all children and youth
  - Provide early childhood education
  - Oppose vouchers
  - Oppose public money to non-public schools
  - Assure accountability of public charter schools
  - Promote sound and appropriate testing/assessment policies
  - Support effective education technology

### **Safe and Nurturing Environments**

**Maryland PTA supports** initiatives and policies that integrate a range of education, health and social services to meet the needs of our children and youth including:

- School-based before and after school programs
- Initiatives that foster a supportive school climate, including:
  - Violence prevention measures
  - Child protection and delinquency prevention initiatives
  - Class size reduction efforts
  - School modernization proposals
  - Counseling programs
- Health and welfare reforms that meet the needs of children and families

**Maryland PTA opposes** commercialism in the classroom and market research that violates student privacy.

### **Maryland Parent and Community Involvement Policies focus on the following:**

**Maryland PTA supports** the Maryland's Parent Advisory Council vision and underlying principles for parent involvement in Maryland. Parents, families, educators, and community member's work together as real partners, hold themselves mutually accountable, and have the knowledge, skills and confidence to succeed at improving the achievement of all students.

#### ***To achieve this vision we embrace these principles:***

- Parents, families, educators and communities are mutually accountable for improving student achievement by supporting parent involvement. This shared responsibility should be monitored and annually reported on by the Maryland State Department of Education.
- Schools must offer a welcoming, trustful, and engaging environment.
- The Maryland State Department of Education, institutions of higher learning, local school systems, and schools must provide ongoing training so that parents and educators can be full partners, informed decision-makers, and effective advocates for children.
- Schools and school systems must respond to the increasing needs of the state's diverse families and communities.
- Parents must support their child's learning at home and in school and must serve as their child's advocate.
- Parents, educators, and community members must be advocates for all children.

**The Maryland's Parent Advisory Council vision and principles recommended the implementation of five criteria.** They are:

- Accountability
- Training
- Leadership
- Partnership
- Communication

## **LEGISLATIVE DIRECTIVES**

Maryland PTA sets its public policy and legislative priorities based upon legislative directives listed on the front page. Maryland PTA is also bound by legislative resolutions, position statements or policy statements of National PTA in specific areas. They are identified herein by (N).

### **Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs**

**Maryland PTA supports** public policy, legislation and regulation, which:

1. Strengthen the protection of children and youth on school grounds and in the communities from the possession or distribution of alcohol or controlled dangerous substances (N)
2. Establish prevention, education and treatment programs (N)
3. Supports appropriate use of cigarette restitution funds to lower the number of youth exposed to and who use tobacco products
4. Establishes vigorous statewide enforcement and strict sentencing for violations of statutes regarding driving under the influence of alcohol and other physical and mind-altering drugs

### **Child Abuse and Neglect**

**Maryland PTA supports** public policy, legislation and regulation, which:

1. Carefully monitor childcare and early childhood education programs, which promote the highest standards of excellence and safety for personnel and facilities (N)
2. Require health and background screenings of all prospective workers including a fingerprint check for childcare and early childhood education program staff
3. Will add the crime of sexual abuse of a child to the list of crimes of violence for which enhanced penalties shall be applied

### **Early Childhood Education**

**Maryland PTA supports** public policy, legislation and regulations, which:

1. Will enable local Boards of Education to establish full-day kindergarten supported by necessary state funding that will ensure that it does not negatively impact class size, programs or facilities

### **Environmental Health Hazards**

**Maryland PTA supports** public policy, legislation and regulations, which:

1. Strengthen the protection of children and youth on school grounds and in the community from environmental hazards (N)
2. Require that parents and communities be notified of environmental conditions and remedial actions in and around school buildings (N)
3. Require appropriate and periodic testing and public notification of results of air, water, fungi, mold and other microbial contaminants in public school buildings and relocatable classrooms (N)
4. Ensure that an environmental site assessment of potential school sites is undertaken to evaluate health risks to children, youth and staff. The evaluation should include a site history, site visit, survey of surrounding potential sources of contamination, and appropriate laboratory testing

### **Education**

**Maryland PTA supports** public policy, legislation and regulation, which:

1. Increase opportunities and resources for children and youth to pursue a variety of career paths.
2. Will offer public schools constructive solutions to such problems as disruptive behavior, truancy and school dropout (N)
3. Will create school-business relationships based on sound educational principles, which will preserve the integrity of the learning environment making sure that programs meet an educational need and not a commercial motive (N)
4. Will ensure the continuance of gifted and talented programs that are adequately funded (N)
5. Will encourage the government to enter into mentoring partnerships with groups in order to expand mentoring programs to all children and youth

## **Education** *(continued)*

**Maryland PTA opposes** policies which sell or provide access to a captive classroom audience, or determine an instructional program or equipment based upon donations rather than what the school identifies as most beneficial to students. (N)

## **Equity in Education**

**Maryland PTA supports** public policy, legislation and regulation which:

1. Ensures individuals with disabilities accessibility to public places, especially public schools and requires that those facilities totally accommodate individuals with disabilities (N)
2. Ensures an educational system that is equitable in resources and programs and is free from bias (N)
3. Ensures that appropriate resources are made available to address disproportionate achievement levels in the educational system
4. Ensures the right to a free, quality public education, adequate food and shelter, and basic health care services for all children and youth (N)

## **Firearms and Weapons**

**Maryland PTA supports** public policy and legislation which:

1. Strengthens the protection of children and youth by prohibiting the possession of firearms on school grounds by anyone other than an officer of the law or an individual who is doing a presentation on firearms
2. Encourages instruction regarding gun safety

## **Funding**

**Maryland PTA supports** public policy, legislation and regulation which:

1. Provides the necessary federal, state, and local funding for implementation and maintenance of public school programs mandated by the Maryland General Assembly, the Federal Government or any other regulatory body (N)
2. Provides a revenue structure that will reliably fund Maryland's responsibility for education and children and youth without shifting undue burdens to local governments
3. Ensures that monies allocated for libraries, but not matched by the counties will not be return to general funds
4. Provides the necessary federal, state, and local funding for the implementation and maintenance of public programs designated to assist homeless children and youth.

**The Maryland PTA opposes** public policy, legislation and regulation which:

1. Diverts public monies to non-public schools (N)
2. Institutes a program of tax credits or vouchers for non-public education (N)
3. Limit funding of public education by any state tax or spending limitations
4. Privatizes instruction implemented with public funds without establishing public policy standards, accessibility and accountability (N)
5. Freezes the hiring of additional social workers, or any proposed cuts to existing social worker positions by the State

## **Health and Nutrition**

**Maryland PTA supports** public policy, legislation and regulation which:

1. Strengthens protection of children and youth on school grounds and in communities from infectious diseases (N)
2. Provides for the continued immunization schedules for all children (N)
3. Will develop, fund and provide access to comprehensive, equitable, affordable and quality health care for all children and families (N)
4. Ensures quality licensed health care professionals in all school buildings
5. Will develop and make available clinical/professional mental health programs and services to meet the needs of all children and youth (N)
6. Provides support for the education of parents/guardians about the potential dangers of diseases requiring immunizations
7. Mandates air conditioning in all Maryland public schools
8. Will address the epidemic of obesity and related chronic diseases in children and youth to include healthier food choices in school cafeterias and vending machines and ensure daily physical activity for all children

## **Parent and Family Involvement**

**Maryland PTA supports** public policy, legislation and regulation which:

1. Parent/family involvement at all educational decision making levels. (N)
2. Active involvement and participation of parent/families at all levels of advocacy pertaining to children and youth. (N)
3. Action by the General Assembly to include parent/family involvement provisions in all legislation pertaining to children's education and development (N)
4. The Maryland State Department of Education implementing and maintaining parent/family involvement and participation as a goal in Maryland.(N)
5. Public policy and legislation, which would mandate a public comment time at the State Board of Education meetings
6. Including parents on all decision-making and advisory committees, and ensure adequate training for such areas as policy, curriculum, budget, school reform initiatives, safety, and personnel. Where site governance bodies exist, give equal representation to parents.
7. Providing parents with current information regarding school policies, practices, and both student and school performance data.
8. Enabling parents to participate as partners when setting school goals, developing or evaluating programs and policies, or responding to performance data
9. Encouraging and facilitating active parent participation in the decisions that affect students, such as student placement, course selection, and individual personalized education plans.
10. Providing understandable, accessible, and well-publicized processes for influencing decisions, raising issues or concerns, appealing decisions, and resolving problems

**The Maryland PTA opposes** all attempts to silence PTA advocacy.

## **Safe and Nurturing Environments**

**Maryland PTA supports** public policy, legislation and regulation which:

1. Strengthens the safety of children and youth on playgrounds, ensuring that playground equipment meets the required safety codes, are maintained and meet safety design standards (N)
2. Ensures that playgrounds are safe and accessible for all children and youth
3. Requires the presence of a parent/guardian whenever there is an interrogation of a minor by school administration or law enforcement officer, in any situation where there is no threat of imminent danger to themselves or others
4. Ensures that children and youth are not placed in adult jails and lock-ups but in appropriate juvenile facilities
5. Ensures that children and youth are assisted in leaving the juvenile justice system, by being given the support and instruction they will need to prevent their return
6. Provides for the development of ratings or other appropriate information systems to inform parents and consumers about the content of video games and other interactive media (N)
7. Provides safeguards for children and youth when using the Internet (N)
8. Ensures the presence of trained personnel in CPR and First Aid at athletic events and practices
9. Mandates guidelines for the use of all protective gear, including eye protection, for children and youth while participating in any athletic activities
10. Ensures proper health and safety procedures are monitored and enforced in Maryland's body piercing and tattoo industry
11. Develops, funds and implements necessary security measures for the safety of children and youth in school buildings and relocatable classrooms and the main office

## **School Construction and Modernization**

**Maryland PTA supports** public policy, legislation, and regulation which:

1. Examines the state school rated capacity formula.
2. Places educational facilities' needs above funding for sports facilities
3. Ensures quality instruction including the reduction of class size where appropriate especially at the elementary level (N)
4. Ensures that each school district has an adequate public facilities ordinance and that such ordinances apply to public school facilities
5. Ensures quality instruction including the reduction of class size where appropriate at the secondary level

## **Spiritual Education**

**Maryland PTA supports** public policy, legislation and regulation which:

1. Will define and clarify the religious rights of teachers and students in public schools (based on the U.S. Department of Education Guidelines for Religious Expression in Public Schools and current court decisions). (N)

## **State and Local Boards of Education**

**Maryland PTA supports** public policy, legislation, and regulation which:

1. Encourages the establishment of local school system policies to ensure the rights of educators, parents, students and other community members to assume roles in the evaluation, selection and adoption or removal of procedures for instructional materials used by children in public schools (N)
2. Asserts that the local boards of education have the obligation to exercise judgment in evaluating automatic suspension under drug and weapons policy by taking into account such factors as the offender's age, the actual danger of the item and the actions and intent of the student involved.
3. Asserts that the local boards of education have the obligation to add the crime of sexual abuse of a child and youth to the student code of conduct and to also exercise their judgment in evaluating automatic suspension for this crime by taking into account such factors as the offender's age, the severity of the crime and the actions and intent of the student(s) involved
4. Asserts that the Boards of Education institutionalize parent/guardian involvement in decision making at the highest level of the school system by establishing and maintaining policies that ensure meaningful and timely public comment during every school board meeting in every district in the State of Maryland
5. Affirms that the performance standards, curriculum, proficiency testing and related matters are the responsibility of the state and local boards of education with the involvement of parents/families and the community
6. Assures that public schools develop strong character education programs in cooperation with parents/guardians and community members.
7. Maintains that the local boards of education are responsible for the implementation of education programs and related services to children and youth
8. Will maintain a neutral position in regards to any legislation concerning teacher union negotiations

**Maryland PTA opposes** all efforts of local governing bodies to make line item cuts in school budgets, once school budgets have been approved.

**Maryland PTA opposes** public policy and legislation, which reduce the authority and responsibility of school boards in the supervision and administration of local public schools. (N)

## **Teacher Quality**

**Maryland PTA supports** public policy, legislation and regulation which:

1. Will ensure that there are qualified guidance counselors in all schools (N)
2. Will ensure the hiring of qualified teacher assistants in all schools
3. Will limit the time teachers are out of the classroom.
4. Will improve the quality and quantity of available substitutes
5. Will require a full background check including a fingerprint check of all student teachers and interns

## **Testing**

**Maryland PTA supports** public policy, legislation and regulation which:

1. Will ensure that a sole test is not the determinant for high school graduation (N)
2. Will require an independent review of the high stakes tests that are administered to all elementary, middle and high school students (N)

## **Transportation**

**Maryland PTA supports** public policy, legislation and regulation which:

1. Ensures the safety of children and youth to and from school regardless of means of transportation
2. Makes it illegal for a school bus to be operated while there are passengers who are not seated due to an insufficient number of seats
3. Reduces the maximum capacity of a school bus to only the number of passengers that can ride safely in a seat
4. Increases motorists' awareness of passing stopped school buses with red lights flashing and gives law enforcement the means to give this issue the priority that it deserves
5. Ensures two-way communications on all school buses
6. Mandates that appropriate seating and child restraints are provided on special needs buses (N)
7. Develops a system of safety restraints in buses that will ensure the maximum safety of children and youth on school buses (N)

## Transportation (continued)

**Maryland PTA supports** public policy, legislation and regulation which:

8. Will study and develop a system, which will ensure the mechanical safety of school buses by requiring regular inspection and recording to verify that they meet current federal motor safety standards
9. Mandates the use of only Type I and Type II school buses for transporting students to school and school-sponsored events (N)

## National PTA's Issues [http://www.pta.org/ia\\_issues.html](http://www.pta.org/ia_issues.html)

National PTA's priorities complement PTA's mission of advocating for services and policies that benefit children, educating parents to be advocates for their children, and engaging community members in support of public education.

- **Current National PTA Action Alerts and Legislation** - <http://capwiz.com/npta2/issues/>
- **Join National PTA Member-to-Member Network** - <http://capwiz.com/npta2/mlm/signup/>

## Summary of the Maryland PTA Legislative Platform

- **The Maryland PTA Legislative Platform** is the basis for any action taken on public policy, legislation and regulations affecting the health education and general welfare of children and youth by Maryland PTA, the PTA Councils or the local PTAs. Maryland PTA Councils, local PTAs and its members may support or abstain from taking action, but they may not take action in opposition or conflict with Maryland PTA (i.e., *Policies, Directives, Resolutions, etc.*).

### **The Maryland PTA Legislative Platform conforms to the policies and resolutions of National PTA**

- **Public Policy Statements** - These are basic broad statements on issues, which will affect the health, welfare and education of children and youth.
- **Legislative Directives** - The priorities that are developed, which will determine action by Maryland PTA in supporting or seeking new legislation
- **Resolutions** - An original main motion, which, because of its importance, length, or complexity is submitted in writing to the MDPTA Resolutions Committee no later than May 15 for review. If approved by the Resolution Committee and Board of Directors, they are submitted at Convention for consideration by the delegates

## General Assembly Legislative Initiatives

Maryland PTA establishes legislative initiatives to pursue during the General Assembly session. Councils, local PTAs, and individual members can suggest initiatives at Maryland PTA Annual Convention.

## Maryland PTA and Coalitions

**Definition:** A coalition is a group of organizations and individuals working together for a common purpose. Usually involving "One issue" or event coalitions only have to agree on one particular issue. The coalition will dissolve when the issue has been resolved or the event has been completed.

Maryland PTA supports coalitions that deal with issues in which PTA has a vital interest involving children and youth and supports the purposes of PTA. Maryland PTA constantly assesses children's needs in order to determine where and how PTA action should be initiated or intensified. State convention resolutions, letters, and results of studies from PTA councils, and local units as well as National PTA programs and priorities, provide direction to the Maryland State PTA Board of Directors.

## The Maryland PTA Legislative Committee

- The Vice President for Legislation shall chair the state legislative committee, consisting of at least six (6) members including the President-Elect.
- The Maryland PTA Legislative Committee meets regularly while the Maryland General Assembly is in session to review bills and the positions of the Maryland PTA; and as needed to develop the Maryland PTA Public Policy and Legislative Program to address emerging issues.

## Proposed Changes to the Maryland PTA Legislative Platform

The Maryland PTA Legislative Committee meets following the General Assembly to review and recommend changes to the Legislative Platform based on:

- Bills presented during the General Assembly Session;
- Responses to the issues survey; and;
- Other emerging issues