Cherokee County School District

Agenda Request Form

Meeting Date	Agenda Item Number
November 18, 2021	I-1

Title

2022 Legislative Partnership Priorities

Requested Action

School Board Consideration of Superintendent's Recommendation for Approval of 2022 Legislative Partnership Priorities

Summary Explanation and Background

Based upon discussion, feedback and input during the October 21, 2021 Superintendent/School Board Strategic Work Session, the Superintendent recommends the attached 2022 Legislative Partnership Priorities for the School Board's consideration and approval.

Priority Area

Organizational and Operational Effectiveness

Financial Impact

N/A

Exhibits: (List)

2022 Legislative Partnership Priorities

Source of Additional Information

Dr. Brian V. Hightower, Superintendent of Schools	770.479.1871
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Cherokee County School District

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2022 LEGISLATIVE PARTNERSHIP PRIORITIES

LOCAL CONTROL & GOVERNANCE

Ensure proposed legislative initiatives strengthen provisions for the local control and management of schools (including the ability for a School Board to set its own local school year calendar, select its own delivery model and scheduling of daily recess, implement its own challenged instructional materials and media policy, incorporate locally-endorsed curricular programs and materials, etc.) . . . thereby empowering local School Boards to fulfill their Constitutional mandate and corresponding responsibility to involve their local constituency, develop locally-derived educational policy and oversee continued performance improvements among their students.

Oppose any effort to eliminate limited sovereign and official immunity . . . thereby protecting K-12 public school districts from lawsuits over day-to-day school operations (e.g., grades, discipline, classroom placements, etc.).

Eliminate State-mandated use of schools as public polling locations during regular school days . . . thereby increasing safety and security for students, staff and buildings.

Allow flexibility to local school districts within Teacher Retirement System (TRS) of Georgia compensation rules when establishing parameters for retiree return to work eligibility requirements, especially in critical shortage areas.

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Consider providing equitable Broadband Internet access for all Georgia families by legislating and funding a multi-year implementation strategy.

Provide high school graduates in Georgia with an alternative diploma option in the area of Career/Technical Preparation . . . thereby further ensuring students' workforce readiness skills and preparation for transitions directly into careers or secondary-level career educational opportunities.

Support legislation aimed at strengthening the sustainability of Mountain Education (State) Charter High School to provide a second chance opportunity for Cherokee County at-risk students to earn an accredited high school diploma in a student-centered, self-paced, evening public high school.

FUNDING

Make public education in the State of Georgia a priority by ending State "austerity reductions" of the Quality Basic Education (QBE) Act and allocate to local school districts all funding earned under the statutorily required formula.

Consider modifications and update of the QBE formula to accurately reflect inflation, true costs of transportation; and, to include a funding weight for economically disadvantaged students, funding for safety and security and increased allocations for counselors, social workers, psychologists and nurses . . . thereby providing support for critically-needed student services functions.

Continue to incorporate any teacher compensation increases into the State teacher salary schedule . . . thereby communicating the State's long-term commitment to providing competitive compensation for teachers and allowing local school districts to concentrate local revenues on offsetting State-required employer rate increases in health care premiums, local share of retirement plan contributions and locally-determined benefit plans (e.g., disability, life, dental, etc.).

Oppose the continuation and/or expansion of existing programs that directly or indirectly use public funds to pay private school tuition for students or provide tax incentives for their parents . . . thereby ensuring a solid revenue base for state funding of public education. Implement a fiscal and academic accountability structure for existing and future voucher programs that is analogous to that which public school districts must adhere.

Preserve investment in Georgia's Teacher's Retirement System (TRS) in order to ensure the longevity of the defined benefit plan.

CHEROKEE COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

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2022 LEGISLATIVE PARTNERSHIP PRIORITIES

FACTS ON FUNDING PRESSURES

(impacting funding availability for classroom instruction)

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STUDENT TRANSPORTATION

The formula for determining QBE allocations for student transportation is out of date and in need of revision. CCSD will receive $2.2M in QBE funds for student transportation for FY21. The total budgeted cost for student transportation during this budget cycle is $22.7M. Comparatively, in FY2010, CCSD was allocated $2.5M in QBE funds for student transportation . . . but had 4,858 fewer students to serve.

Looking statewide, in 1991 the State provided 54% of the total cost of providing transportation. By 2001 the amount was down to 39%. In 2021, the amount provided by the QBE formula had decreased to less than 12% of the actual cost.

EMPLOYEE RETIREMENT

The Teacher Retirement System of Georgia has increased the employer (CCSD) contribution rate from 14.27% (FY17) to an expected 19.98% in FY23. CCSD's annual payment to TRS on behalf of its employees for FY22 is expected to exceed $51.8M ($9.4M paid via local funds).

Due to the vision and commitment of Georgia leaders over the decades, TRS:

- Ranks in the top third of pension systems in the U.S., is actuarially sound, and has a proven record of sustainability.
- Provides a compelling recruitment and retention incentive for the education industry, supporting a life-long career path for high-quality teachers in Georgia schools.
- Positively impacts Georgia's economy and the economic success of our state, as pensions for over 140,000 TRS retirees are reinvested in local communities across the state each year.
- Affords a defined benefit plan as the last, best benefit for Georgia's dedicated teachers, who are diligently preparing the next generation of Georgia citizens.

As Georgia is recognized to be the #1 place to do business, it must also seek to be the #1 place to teach. Supporting TRS today ensures success for Georgia tomorrow.

EMPLOYEE HEALTH INSURANCE

Beginning in FY08, the State's contribution for non-certified employee health insurance premiums was reduced and then eliminated by FY12 (from over $500M statewide to $0), requiring local school districts to fully absorb the additional costs since that time. CCSD's employer contribution toward the annual cost of providing health insurance for a non-certified employee has risen from $2,000 in FY10 to $11,340 in FY21 and continuing for FY23-... this cost, nearing $1,000 per month/per participating employee, represents a 467% increase.

CCSD's health insurance costs for non-certified employees are projected to be $16.3M for FY22 far exceeding and more than doubling the $7.5M cost in FY14. The extraordinary financial impact of continuing exorbitant employer contributions rates for State-mandated benefits without corresponding State funding continues to be of great concern. As such, CCSD continues to privatize custodial and grounds services and increase the use of part-time/temporary workers for non-certified staffing as cost-reduction measures.

2022 LEGISLATIVE DELEGATION



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