

**Clarke County School District  
Resolution on the 2019 Legislative Agenda**

The Clarke County School District Board of Education adopts the following as its priorities for the 2019 State Legislative Agenda:

**I. Fulfill the State's Promise to Fully Fund Public School Students.**

Index the Quality Basic Education formula for inflation and fully fund the student transportation formula.

*Rationale:* The state's 33-year-old formula for funding public schools, the Quality Basic Education formula, is not indexed for inflation. The money the state sends to CCSD to educate students does not go as far today as it once did, limiting the services the district can provide to them. If the General Assembly adopted an inflation index for the QBE formula in 2002, CCSD would receive an estimated \$12 million more in state funds for the 2018-2019 school year. Clarke County students would receive an even greater amount if the legislature had included an inflation index when it approved the formula in 1986.

The state does not fully fund its student transportation formula. CCSD spends about \$8.8 million to transport students in the 2018-2019 school year. The state provides about \$1 million, or 12 percent. The district must use local funds to fill this gap, shifting funds away from the classroom.

**II. Eliminate Private School Voucher Programs.**

End Georgia's Private School Tax Credit program, a voucher program funded through \$100 million in state tax credits. Lawmakers should also reject education savings account programs, a type of voucher.

*Rationale:* The tax credit voucher program, also referred to as the private school scholarship program, diverts funds from public education and other critical state investments. It lacks accountability and has minimal transparency. Unknown data include: the number of voucher recipients, the district they reside in, their grade level, and the criteria under which they are eligible for the program. Nor is there an assessment of their learning, a concern as vouchers have been shown to lead to lower levels of learning in math and reading for participating students. In addition no information about participating private schools is collected.

**III. Improve the Quality of Pre-Kindergarten**

Increase funding for Pre-Kindergarten teachers to provide salaries comparable to the state's salary schedule for K-12 teachers.

*Rationale:* The state provides far less money to compensate Pre-K teachers than K-12 teachers. The state allocates about \$8,200 less to cover salary and benefits for a first-year Pre-K teacher with a bachelor's degree than a comparable K-12 teacher. This leads to higher attrition rates among Pre-K teachers, undermining the quality of the program.

#### **IV. Promote Teacher Recruitment and Retention**

Increase teacher salaries, maintain the current structure of the Teacher Retirement System, provide loan forgiveness for those who teach in high-need schools or subject areas, and ensure beginning teachers have effective mentoring and support.

*Rationale:* Teacher quality is the most significant in-school factor influencing student achievement, but attracting and retaining effective teachers is a growing challenge. Across Georgia, 44 percent of new teachers leave the profession within five years. Increasing teacher salaries attracts more qualified candidates, and high quality mentoring programs can offer new teachers the support needed to succeed. Connecticut's Teacher Education and Mentoring program is an example of a state-funded, comprehensive mentoring program for new teachers. Georgia developed an induction program for new teachers but did not fund it.

#### **V. Provide Financial Aid to Improve Postsecondary Enrollment and Completion**

Fund the need-based financial aid program created in 2018 by the General Assembly through House Bill 787. Increase funding for the HOPE Grant program to cover full tuition for students in the Technical College System of Georgia.

*Rationale:* Georgia does not have a funded, comprehensive need-based financial aid program. The HOPE Scholarship and the Zell Miller Scholarship, the state's most prominent aid programs, serve about 36 percent of students in the University System of Georgia and 8 percent of associate degree students in the technical college system. Economically disadvantaged students and students of color are even less likely to receive a scholarship. The HOPE Grant, which provides aid to certificate and diploma students in technical colleges, no longer covers full tuition. The limited reach of these programs prevents many students from entering and completing postsecondary programs.

#### **VI. Foster Liberty and Educational Opportunities for All Americans**

Remove barriers for immigrant children who were raised in Georgia and seek a postsecondary education. This includes removing the ban against these students entering the state's top-tier postsecondary institutions and eliminating the requirement that they pay out-of-state tuition.

*Rationale:* Students who are immigrants are a valuable resource for the community and the state's economy. By 2025 over 60 percent of jobs in Georgia will require some type of postsecondary education. Currently 48 percent of young adults in the state have postsecondary training. Excluding immigrant students who have succeeded in K-12 from the state's top-tier institutions and requiring them to pay significantly more to attend other colleges and universities, imposes significant barriers to their full participation in the workforce. It also deprives employers of prospective skilled employees.