

**Clarke County School District
Resolution on the 2021 Legislative Agenda**

The Clarke County School District Board of Education adopts the following as its priorities for the 2021 State Legislative Agenda:

I. Recognize the Additional Needs of Title 1 School Systems

Provide additional funding to Title 1 School Systems beyond the QBE formula.

Rationale: Recognizing that Title 1 school systems are dominated by students of color living in poverty, the acknowledgment of Georgia's history of slavery and oppression must be taken into account when considering state funding of K-12 education.

For example given the safety needs of children living in low-income neighborhoods, CCSD transports students within a half mile of their school and thus the districts transportation costs are much higher than in many other school districts. CCSD spent \$9.8 million to transport students in the 2018-2019 school year. The state provided about \$1 million, or 11 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 and increase assistant teachers' salary.

Rationale: The state provides far less money to compensate Pre-K teachers than K-12 teachers. The state allocates about \$8,720 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.

The state-funded salary for Pre-K assistant teachers is \$16,190.35. As with lead teachers, this low wage leads to high attrition rates, which dilutes the quality of the program.

IV. Promote Teacher Recruitment and Retention

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. Improving the profession's attractiveness is essential to reducing that number. This includes maintaining a robust retirement program and

offering loan forgiveness programs. To have high quality mentoring programs, mentor teachers need to be trained and compensated.

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. Require the Georgia Lottery Corporation to dedicate 35 percent of its revenue to the Lottery for Education Account.

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.

Provided a student selects a program where both the Hope Grant and the Hope Career Grant can be applied, the out-of-pocket expense would be \$119 per semester plus books. For a student choosing a program that is not eligible for the Hope Career Grant the cost would be \$619/semester plus books.

By law, the lottery corporation is required to direct as "nearly as practical" up to 35 percent of revenue to the education account, which funds the HOPE financial aid programs and Pre-Kindergarten. It has not come close to meeting that level in over 20 years. The portion of lottery revenue invested in the education account in 2020 was 26.1 percent.

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.