

2023 PTA LEGISLATIVE ASK: WELCOMING, INCLUSIVE AND SUPPORTIVE SCHOOLS

Helping schools create a welcoming, supportive and inclusive learning environment for all students!

PTA urges the 118th Congress to pass legislation that:

- ✓ Promotes positive behavioral interventions that are conducive to learning and discourages the use of disciplinary practices that are harmful, overly punitive or disproportionately applied to certain students based on their disability, race, religion or other protected characteristic.
- ✓ Supports every student's mental health, teaches essential life skills and provides and connects students with necessary behavioral and mental health resources at school and in their community.
- ✓ Encourages the development of inclusive curricula and materials that are historically accurate, age and developmentally appropriate and provides a means for students to explore diverse concepts, cultures and perspectives.
- ✓ Provides the foundation for all children to learn and thrive, including basic necessities like access to clean air, water and healthy nutrition in all communities.
- ✓ Ensures equal access to education programs and activities for all children and youth and strengthens protections against discrimination in the school setting.



Issue Overview

PTA firmly believes that all students—including students from historically marginalized communities—have the right to a high-quality, equitable education in a welcoming, supportive and inclusive school. Every student can reach their full potential when the school environment is one in which they are accepted, truly valued and can authentically be themselves.

- ✓ One out of every five students experience a mental or behavioral health concern each year and 40% of children will experience a mental health concern by seventh grade. Schools play an integral role in promoting resiliency, wellness and school connectedness and in facilitating protective factors among students in collaboration with community partners.
- ✓ Positive school climate has been linked to several important outcomes including increased student self-esteem and self-concept, decreased absenteeism, enhanced risk prevention, reduced behavioral problems and disciplinary actions (in-school detention and out-of-school suspension) and increased school completion.
- ✓ At the universal level, schools can work to create welcoming, inclusive and supportive school climates so that all students have the chance to experience school success.

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PTA urges members of Congress to:

- ✓ Co-sponsor the Bill of Rights for Students and Parents Resolution
- ✓ Reintroduce and co-sponsor the Mental Health Matters Act
- ✓ Reintroduce and co-sponsor the Safe Schools Improvement Act
- ✓ Reintroduce and co-sponsor the Protecting Our Students in Schools Act (POSSA)
- ✓ Reintroduce and co-sponsor the Keeping All Students Safe Act (KASSA)
- ✓ Reintroduce and co-sponsor the EQUALITY Act
- ✓ Reintroduce and co-sponsor the Farm to School Act



Bill of Rights for Students and Parents Resolution is a statement of values that expresses Congress' commitment to building safe, welcoming, supportive and inclusive schools across the nation and that highlights the importance of meaningful and inclusive parental involvement in K-12 education.

Mental Health Matters Act would create grants to increase the number of school-based mental health service providers, establish requirements for institutions of higher education concerning students with disabilities and encourage trauma-informed services and support in schools.

Safe Schools Improvement Act would establish federal standards to protect every student from bullying and harassment in K-12 schools, regardless of actual or perceived race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability and religion.

Protecting All Students in Schools Act (POSSA) would ban the use of corporal punishment in schools.

Keeping All Students Safe Act (KASSA) would ban the use of seclusion in schools and significantly limit the use of restraint to emergency situations.

EQUALITY Act would update federal nondiscrimination protections by explicitly prohibiting discrimination against people based on their sex, sexual orientation or gender identity in public schools and other public accommodations and facilities.

Farm to School Act would expand the Department of Agriculture's Farm to School Program which helps school districts build school and community gardens and often includes hands-on learning opportunities for students to play an active role in their gardens. This program serves to also support incorporating local foods in all school meal programs, with the ultimate goal of improving overall access to local, fresh foods in K-12 schools and helping K-12 students understand healthy food options.

Questions?

*Email National PTA Director of Government Affairs
Kate Clabaugh (kclabaugh@PTA.org)*