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Kansas PTA 2024 Standing Policy Positions & Legislative Priorities

PTA Mission and Values. The mission of the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) is to make every child’s potential a reality by engaging and empowering families and communities to advocate for all children. Initiatives of the PTA are aligned with this mission and guided by five core values: collaboration, commitment, diversity, respect and accountability.

This document includes, but is not limited to, the Kansas PTA legislative standing positions and priority positions. Please visit Kansas PTA at www.kansas-pta.org or National PTA at www.pta.org for complete Policy Statements and Position Papers.

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITY POSITIONS

Priority 1 – Kansas Constitution. Kansas PTA supports efforts to preserve the Kansas Constitution. This includes Article VI, regarding public education, to protect non-partisan elections of local school board members and their local control, to retain legislators’ obligation to provide suitable finance for ongoing educational improvement, as well as State Board of Education oversight of state education standards and accreditations.

Priority 2 – Investing in Public Education. Kansas PTA supports constitutionally adequate and equitable funding of the state school finance formula and a balanced tax policy to ensure that our state has enough funds to deliver core services, including public education which is about half of most state budgets. Tax policy based upon a balanced combination of income, property and sales taxes has a history of reliability and fairness.

Priority 3 – Fully Fund Special Education and other Mandates. Kansas PTA supports efforts to fully fund state and federal education mandates, particularly special education, without disproportionately shifting the required financial obligation to local communities.

Priority 4 – Recruitment and Retention of Educators. Kansas PTA supports efforts to attract and retain educators, including state funding for a meaningful pension plan (KPERs), teacher mentoring, professional development and other evidenced-based programs and policies that promote quality instruction.

Priority 5 – Early Childhood. Kansas PTA supports investment in quality early learning, such as all-day kindergarten, Pre-K programs, and Parents as Teachers, to provide opportunity for every Kansas child to be prepared to succeed in school. Children who enter school kindergarten-ready are more likely to experience academic success and to require fewer resources to achieve state education standards.

Priority 6 – Public Dollars for Public Education. Kansas PTA opposes the use of vouchers for the tuition of non-public schools, also known as tax credit scholarships, education savings accounts and “choice”. Non-public schools are not required to accept all students,

can discriminate in admissions, mandate religious instruction, operate under different rules (or no rules) of transparency and accountability, waive access to special education services and such.

Priority 7 – Accountability. Kansas PTA supports efforts of the Kansas Department of Education to implement a proactive model of accountability and accreditation, designed around multiple measures and leading indicators which can be used to inform improvement at the local level along with lag indicators that report on what has already happened.

Priority 8 – Mental Health and Wellness. Kansas PTA supports efforts to restore comprehensive community mental health services, to invest in professional development regarding trauma-informed care and students’ social, emotional and mental health issues with emphasis on early detection, to promote educational programs for families, and to reduce the stigma of mental illness and build a culture of understanding around children and youth mental health.

Priority 9 – Equity and Belonging. Kansas PTA supports policies that help to create a sense of belonging among students and staff, which is critical for student learning. Belonging is the outcome of policies that support diversity, equity and inclusion.

Priority 10 – Non-discrimination policies. Kansas PTA recognizes the principle of equal opportunity under the law. Legislative action is encouraged to identify a comprehensive list of classes protected against discriminate on the basis of race, creed, religion, color, national origin, ancestry, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, or any statutorily prohibited basis.

Priority 11 – Access to Affordable Quality Health Care. Kansas PTA supports efforts to develop and fund comprehensive health care programs, including school-linked health clinics, and to provide equitable access to quality, affordable health care for all children.

Priority 12 – Gun Safety. Kansas PTA supports comprehensive efforts to improve the safety of our nation’s youth and our communities, including gun safety and violence-prevention measures.

Priority 13 – Student Data, Privacy and Info Sharing. Kansas PTA recognizes the value of collecting student longitudinal data to make informed decisions about educational policy and practices and will advocate that data collectors be transparent and engaged with families on the development, implementation and notification about policies and procedures related to the privacy and protection of student data; and, allow for parents and families to retain the right to review and request corrections of their child(ren)’s education records or profiles.

Publication of the Kansas PTA Advocacy Leadership Team
Denise Sultz, Kansas PTA President
Devin Wilson, Kansas PTA Vice President of Advocacy
Rachel Russell, Kansas PTA State Legislative Chair
Mary Sinclair, PhD, Team Advocate

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Standing Policy Positions

EDUCATION POLICY – Kansas PTA supports open access to quality education that provides every Kansas child an equitable opportunity to grow and to achieve the state education standards. The Kansas PTA recognizes no education system can be of the highest quality without the support, involvement and collaboration of family caregivers, educators, legislators and the community.

- **Standing Position – Charter Schools.** Kansas PTA supports current state charter legislation, passed in 1994. Charter legislation should assure that charter school authorizing bodies meet the highest levels of accountability, ensure transparency, and meaningfully engage parents. Charter Schools should be open to all students and comply with federal and state laws governing public schools that require transparency, responsibility and accountability. The National PTA Position Statement on Charter Schools can be found at www.pta.org for complete review.
- **Standing Position – Rigorous State Education Standards.** Kansas PTA supports the State Board of Education’s routine review, revision and adoption of state education standards for mathematics, English language arts, social studies and such. We encourage the State Board’s continued use of stakeholder engagement throughout the revision process, including meaningful input from parents and teachers. Kansas PTA opposes legislation that would ban or defund the education standards as approved by our freely elected, non-partisan members of the State Board of Education.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT POLICY – Kansas PTA recognizes that when families, schools and communities work effectively together as partners, family engagement is a powerful strategy that boosts student achievement and better prepares our children to lead healthy, happy and productive lives.

- **Standing Position – Family Engagement.** Kansas PTA will encourage the adoption of PTA family engagement standards into relevant legislation and policy.
- **Standing Position – Home-School Partnerships.** Kansas PTA supports active parental and community involvement in the educational process of students today and creates awareness among parents and the community of the tremendous effect their involvement can make in the educational process.

SAFETY POLICY – Kansas PTA supports programming and policies that create a safe learning environment for students and staff.

- **Standing Position – Safe Routes to School.** Kansas PTA supports policies and practices that make walking and bicycling to school safe options, through infrastructure improvements, enforcement, tools, safety education, and incentives.
- **Standing Position – Positive School Discipline.** Kansas PTA supports positive school discipline policies that are administered proportionately, are timely, appropriate and fair for each student based on their violation of school rules and that keep children in school and learning. Exclusionary discipline practices should only be used in schools as a last resort effort to preserve the safety of students and staff. If a community opts to deploy a law enforcement official within a school building, policies should ensure that schools and law enforcement agencies have a clear and concise memorandum of understanding that defines the role of the school resource officer (SRO) aligned with effective practices.
- **Standing Position – Bullying Prevention.** Kansas PTA supports anti-bullying efforts to create positive and safe school environments, which empower peers to establish supportive, inclusive relationships and to address the prevention and intervention of bullying behavior.
- **Standing Position – School Facilities.** Kansas PTA recognizes the importance of safe school environments and their impact on students' academic achievement, through policies that ensure all children receive the chance for a quality education in facilities that are safe, well-equipped, and sufficiently maintained.

HEALTH, WELFARE AND JUVENILE JUSTICE POLICY – The Kansas PTA supports efforts that safeguard and promote the health and welfare of Kansas kids, allowing for learners to engage and make educational growth.

- **Standing Priority – Vaping Prevention.** Kansas PTA supports efforts to educate the public about the dangers of electronic nicotine delivery devices and restricting their access to youth. Local communities are encouraged to follow the work of the Kansas Vaping Task Force, including policy and programs that supports access to cessation programs which may include the use of FDA approved nicotine delivery systems.
- **Standing Priority – Juvenile Justice.** Kansas PTA supports prevention and early intervention programs and initiatives to reduce participation of youth in the juvenile justice system and to promote the prevention of delinquency.
- **Standing Position – Mental Health and Wellness.** Kansas PTA supports robust federal, state and local policies that provide mental health services to all children, youth and their families so every child can reach their fullest potential. Furthermore, Kansas PTA believes in greater outreach and education to parents, families and related groups so they can be advocates for their children and ensure their child's mental health needs are met under the letter of state and federal law
- **Standing Position – Healthy Nutrition.** Kansas PTA recognizes good nutrition as a key component in creating healthy and productive individuals and that ongoing study in the field of nutrition provides the public with dynamic information on what constitutes a healthy diet, thus Kansas PTA supports continuous review and data-

informed revision to food service programs and nutrition education. Kansas PTA strongly opposes the practice of meal debt policies that shame or humiliate students—or prevent children from receiving a full meal equivalent to their peers and supports policy-making decisions to expand equitable access to school meals,

- **Standing Position – Vaccination.** Kansas PTA encourages the authorized entity to require certification of immunizations to prevent communicable disease, as a condition of entry into public and non-public schools, preschools and childcare facilities. We recognize the need to make provisions for exemptions for medical reasons.
- **Standing Position – Foster Care and Homeless Students.** Kansas PTA supports funding and policy that allows foster and homeless youth to receive timely supports needed to prevent and break the cycle of homelessness; to protect their right to a healthy, safe and crisis-free environment; to provide the legally required support of removing barriers to on-time grade level progression and graduation; and to continue to ensure the provisions of McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 1987.
- **Standing Position – Sustainability.** Kansas PTA recognizes the growing importance of environmental issues, the impact they have on the health and welfare of children and their families and the scientific consensus surrounding climate change. Kansas PTA urges policies that seek climate solutions and that promote environmental health and safety, that help protect our world's finite natural resources, and protect children from the adverse effects of anthropogenic global warming.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION AND BELONGING POLICY – “The National Congress of Mothers, irrespective of creed, color or condition, stands for all parenthood, childhood, homehood.” – Alice McLellan Birney, 1898 Cofounder of National PTA

Those words, true in 1898, are even truer today. The Kansas PTA is committed to advancing diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging at all levels of the association. PTAs everywhere must understand and embrace the uniqueness of all individuals, appreciating that each contributes a diversity of views, experiences, cultural heritage, traditions, skills, abilities, values and preferences.

- **Standing Position – Children of Immigrant Families.** Kansas PTA supports children belong with their parents, family members or legal guardian. The protection and preservation of public school attendance, student learning and well-being is of paramount importance to the future and success of our country. All children including undocumented children should have access to free public education.
- **Standing Position – Citizenship and Equality.** Kansas PTA recognizes that respect for, and expansion of civil rights requires they be defended whenever threatened and that children and youth be taught the significance of civil rights and responsibilities in American culture.

- **Standing Position – Inclusive Curriculum.** Kansas PTA supports the implementation of diverse and inclusive curriculum and supports the necessary accompanying professional development for culturally and linguistically-responsive teaching and learning so that the history of all students is accurately represented and taught.

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