

## 2017 Legislative Priorities

### Juvenile Justice

- Encourage collaboration between law enforcement, the judicial system, and child welfare agencies.
- Promote alternative dispute resolution techniques that provide a range of possible sanctions.
- Encourage the use of youth Civil Citation.
- Prohibit youth who are charged with a serious crime from being tried in the adult court system unless there has been an opportunity for a judicial hearing and appeal.
- Prevent the incarceration of youth in adult facilities.
- Support assisting youth leaving the juvenile justice system with programs that prevent recidivism.

### Gun Safety

*Every day, across the United States 7 children and teens (ages 0 to 19) die from gun violence. Experts estimate that currently one-third of guns are acquired through transactions exempt from background checks, including gun show and internet purchases. Eighteen states have already passed legislation requiring background checks at least for handgun purchases at gun shows. A majority of gun owners and NRA members support background checks as consistent with their Second Amendment rights.*

- For the safety of all children, Florida should close the “gun show loophole” and implement universal background checks.
- Provide all relevant records to the FBI’s National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS).
- Florida should outlaw military style semi-automatic weapons.

### Funding

The Florida PTA urges the Legislature to give education programs high priority and ensure adequate funding provisions to guarantee an equal educational opportunity for all children, to include:

- High quality VPK programs
- High quality K-12 public education
- Post-Secondary education
- Career Vocational Training (CTE)

### Wellbeing of Children

#### Recess

- Include at least 20 minutes of daily unstructured free play for each student in grades K-5.

#### Foster Care/Guardian ad Litem

- Protect the welfare and safety of all children.
- Improve oversight into placements and accountability of foster families.
- Support increased funding to the Guardian ad Litem program.
- Ensure that every child in dependency court has a Guardian ad Litem.

#### Texting and Driving

- Support laws that restrict the use of any hand-held device that may distract from driving.
- Promote education that increases awareness of the dangers of distracted driving.

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### Healthy Sleep for Teens

*Research has proven that sufficient quality sleep reduces absenteeism, tardiness, risky behavior and improves academic performance, health, safety, and future earnings.*

- Promote community education about healthy sleep and encourage school districts to implement policies supporting it.

### Anti-Bullying

*Every child deserves to go to school excited to learn in a safe and nurturing environment, without the fear of bullying violence or discrimination.*

- Support legislation that specifically protects LGBT youth.
- Encourage school districts to incorporate inclusive policies and practices that create and maintain safe learning environments for all students.

### Supporting Student Success

#### ESSA

*Under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), Florida must review and revise its system of educational standards, assessments, and accountability. Additional accountability is stipulated for homeless and foster children, children in the juvenile justice system, and children of military families.*

- Invite parents and other stakeholders to participate in the drafting and implementation of Florida's plan.
- Recommend parental engagement as the additional school grading component, as such involvement is highly correlated to student success.

### Equal Access, Accountability, & Transparency

*All educational institutions receiving public dollars, whether directly or indirectly, should be held to the same academic and accountability standards as public schools.*

- Provide equal educational opportunities for all students regardless of race, gender, national origin, language, religion, age, disability, or sexual orientation.
- Require all schools receiving funding through any state-authorized voucher, grant, or scholarship programs to adhere to the same statewide mandated assessment, school performance grading system, student enrollment requirements, and to involve parents in decision making processes.
- Ensure that all parents and community members have unrestricted access to information regarding curriculum, assessments, class size, student enrollment, teacher certifications, and financials, including schools that receive tax credit scholarship funding.

### Early Childhood Education

- Support state incentives for quality child care and preschool programs that are accessible and affordable for all children.
- Support legislation and policies which ensure quality teacher training, health and safety standards.
- Promote effective early education programs for children from birth to age five that are adequately funded, developmentally appropriate, and coordinate comprehensive services for young children and their families.
- Include strong parent and family engagement components in early childhood programs.
- Encourage early detection, interventions, and prevention programs for learning problems and mental health needs.

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***About us: Florida PTA is the largest and oldest volunteer association, dedicated to advocating for every child with one voice. Florida PTA is made up of approximately 300,000 members in over 1400 local PTA units that represent the association's advocacy for Education and the well-being of ALL children. For more information, contact Angie Gallo, Legislation Chair at [legislation@floridapta.org](mailto:legislation@floridapta.org).***