



Association of Metropolitan School Districts

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AMSD Legislative Priorities 2021

The AMSD Board of Directors urges the Governor and Legislature to address the priorities listed below to help students recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, stabilize education funding, and close opportunity gaps to ensure equitable academic outcomes for each and every student.

COVID-19 Recovery

The pandemic has caused significant disruptions and lost learning opportunities during the school year. It is critical that expanded summer learning options be made available to students and families. In addition, school districts have experienced an unanticipated enrollment decline that is having a major impact on school district budgets. To allow school districts to develop budgets and plan summer learning opportunities and staffing levels, it is critical that state policymakers approve an education package prior to adjourning for the scheduled spring recess on March 26. At a minimum, the package should:

- Mitigate the impact of the enrollment decline related to the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Provide funding for summer programming opportunities to address unfinished learning as well as support to meet the mental health needs of students;
- Extend authority for school districts to offer distance learning through the 2021-22 school year to meet the needs of students and families; and
- Streamline the process to obtain a short-call substitute teaching license to align with the Tier 1 licensing requirement to teach a class in a career and technical education or career pathways course of study.

Stability

Even before the COVID-19 related enrollment decline, the state's unstable and unpredictable education funding system provided challenges for school districts. To stabilize the funding system, the Governor and Legislature should:

- Increase the basic formula by 2 percent per year for the next two years and index the formula to inflation in the future;
- Link local optional revenue to the formula;

- At a minimum, increase special education funding to a level sufficient to prevent the cross-subsidy from growing in the next biennium and develop and implement a plan to close the cross-subsidy in five years;
- Allow locally elected school boards to renew an existing operating referendum following a public hearing and opportunity for public testimony; and
- Refrain from enacting any new mandates and repeal existing unfunded mandates and burdensome paperwork requirements.

Close Opportunity Gaps

To close opportunity gaps and accelerate growth for students of color and other historically underserved students, the Governor and Legislature should:

- Increase funding for the English learner program to close the funding shortfall;
- Expand programs and incentives to attract, develop and retain teachers, particularly teachers of color and teachers in shortage areas;
- Maintain multiple pathways to licensure in the tiered licensing system;
- Link extended time revenue to the formula allowance; and
- Increase access to school-based, pre-kindergarten programs.

Omnibus Tax Bill Priorities

Property tax levies play a critical role in funding education programs and facilities. These levies have widely varying impacts on local property taxpayers depending on the property wealth of the school district. The Governor and Legislature should:

- Increase equalization of the operating referendum, local optional revenue and debt service levies to enhance taxpayer equity; and
- Oppose taxpayer subsidies of private education through vouchers, tax credits or scholarships.