



IMPROVE MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

Suicide is the second leading cause of death for ages 15-34 and half of all lifetime mental illnesses are identified by age 14. Most students do not receive the mental health services they need due to stigma and lack of access to services and of those who do get help, most do so only in school.

- Fund unified mental health teams at nationally recommended ratios: School Counselors 1:250, School Psychologists (1:500-700) and School Social Workers (1:250)
Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Act, ESSCP (H.R.4381. | S.2499)
- Provide Mental Health Training for all staff and support social emotional learning curriculum and excused absences for mental health to remove stigma
Suicide and Threat Assessment Nationally Dedicated to Universal Prevention (STANDUP) Act of 2019 (H.R. 2599 | S.2492)

VAPING & E-CIGARETTES

1 in 4 High School students use e-cigarettes. In 2017, 16.3% of Virginia high school youth reported currently using tobacco products, including e-cigarettes. Among Virginia high school youth, 6.5% reported currently smoking cigarettes. A key reason 77.9% and 90.3% of youth and young adults cite for e-cigarettes use is that they like the flavors compared to 66.4% of adults aged 25 and over.

- *Smoke-Free Schools Act of 2019 (H.R. 4019 | S.1832)*

BROADBAND ACCESS & TECHNOLOGY IMPACT

Access to high speed internet touches almost every aspect of modern life yet there are an estimated 660,000 Virginians who don't have access to broadband. Almost 50% of rural Virginians lack access to high speed internet and 29% don't have any internet service at all. Digital learning and connectivity at school and at home enables students to be prepared for tomorrow's jobs and levels the playing field for students regardless of their affluence level or geographic location.

- *Digital Equity Act of 2019 (H.R.4486 | S.1167)*
- *CAMRA Act (H.R. 1367 | S.558)* Support research on the role and impact of media and technology on the development of children and adolescents.

BUILDING INFRASTRUCTURE

Quality of public school buildings and grounds is a health, educational, and environmental equity issue for families and communities. Facilities are not neutral! Many localities do not have a sufficient tax base to maintain their aging schools. Schools should be recognized and funded as an important component of our nation's infrastructure.

- *Rebuild America's Schools Act (H.R.865 | S.266)*

SCHOOL SAFETY

School safety is a critical priority for all parents, educators, students, and community members that should not be taken for granted.

- Fund physical building improvements to provide secure entry identification and regular school building safety audits
- Communicate to parents at the start of the school year regarding threat assessment protocols, emergency preparation drills, crisis response procedures and re-unification protocols.
- Memorandums of Understanding with local law enforcement agencies, training programs for School Resource Officers and funding for SRO grant programs that support local control.
- Emergency preparedness for individuals with limited English proficiency, disabilities, or other special needs

ADVANCE EQUITY & DIVERSITY

Celebrating the diversity of views, experiences, cultural heritages and traditions, skills and abilities, values and preferences that make up our communities is at the core of PTA work. It is important to acknowledge and advance work and legislation that addresses structural inequities that are rooted in our nation's social, political, economic, and educational systems.

- Enhance the SOQs to include one full-time Chief Equity Officer per school division to oversee implementation of culturally responsive practices.
- Support work that increases the diversity of teachers in our schools
- Review history text books and curriculum to eliminate language, behavior or retelling of events that is stereotypical, demeaning, exclusionary, or judgmental and instead embrace cultural contexts with appreciation and celebration of cultures and their contributions to our society.
- Require school staff to participate in regular cultural sensitivity professional development workshops.

CURRICULUM – WORLD LANGUAGES

Studying world languages results in higher scores in verbal and math standardized tests, strengthens critical thinking skills, creativity, problem solving capabilities and memory function. Additionally, the ability to speak, read and write in a world language increases cultural awareness and is essential to attract business, engage in world trade, participate in scientific research, foster diplomacy and respond to global humanitarian emergencies.

- Virginia PTA urges the development of K-16 world language instructional program that supports new language acquisition, retention of heritage languages and programs to recruit and retain qualified world language teachers.

SCHOOL QUALITY PROFILE DATA

Good communication is rooted in strong data policies and practices. School Quality profiles are an important tool families can use to understand if their school is meeting the academic and social emotional needs of their students.

- Virginia PTA urges the collection and reporting of important data about teacher diversity, mental health programs, and school climate
 - Diversity: Teacher ethnic diversity and languages spoken. Profiles translated into other languages.
 - Mental Health & Safety: Restraint & Seclusion, Threat Assessment and trauma informed care practices.

2020 PRIORITIES

Newly resolved



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EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Education received during the first five years of a child's life is important to a child's long-term educational success. Virginia currently ranks 33rd in the nation in investment in early childhood education. According to the Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Program, almost half of Virginia children enter kindergarten without the basic skills they need to succeed in school.

- Expand Virginia's Preschool Initiative and Mixed Delivery Grants to include at-risk three- year-olds in both public and private settings.
- Create a uniform measurement, oversight and regulatory framework

CLEAN ENERGY FOR SCHOOLS

Schools should take advantage new solar and electric energy technologies that reduce and stabilize energy costs and fossil fuel pollution thus creating a healthier environment for students while concurrently providing real-world STEAM learning opportunities.

- Electric School Buses: Support funding, grants and incentive programs that enable school districts to purchase electric school buses and install charging stations and electric transportation infrastructure.
- Solar Panels for Schools: Remove net metering limits and barriers that limit school district's use of Power Purchase Agreements to ensure equal access to clean energy solutions for all schools in the state.
- Science Curriculum: Adjust the Standards of Learning to provide hands on opportunities for students to learn about alternative technologies.
- **Renew America's Schools Act of 2019 (H.R.3322 | S.1890)**

AGRICULTURE: FARM to SCHOOL w/ GARDENS

Agriculture is the largest industry in Virginia, plays an important role in our daily lives and is evolving due to technology advancements, yet is undervalued. Agriculture education should be integrated directly in the curriculum (instead of through the nutrition department) to support rural workforce education and development, increase locally grown foods in school cafeterias and provide hands-on learning for all students.

- Integrate Agriculture Education concepts directly in the Standards of Learning and provide space for school gardens.
- Fund a School Nutrition Integration and Procurement specialist for each region in order to support local economic activity and increase the quantity of locally sourced foods served in school cafeterias.
- Support grant and incentive programs for processing-procurement of locally grown food
- Support science credits for high school students taking agriculture classes and a more direct certification path for agriculture education teachers
- **The Food and Nutrition Education in Schools Act of 2020 (S.3293)**