

2017 Legislative Priorities

- Support new funding for capital facilities maintenance and construction. The 2008 Public School Facility Condition Assessment estimated a cost of \$360 million to address deficiencies statewide for K-12 educational facilities. Between 2008 and 2013, the state contributed \$63 million, or 18% of the amount needed, toward this deficit. No funds were appropriated in the 2015 Legislative Session for facilities maintenance.
- Support efforts to address teacher recruitment and retention issues, both statewide and in isolated or rural districts. Judge Sherlock's 2008 opinion noted continuing problems with recruitment and retention and this has persisted to date. Employee benefits, particularly the cost of health insurance, continue to outpace inflation and consume an increasing portion of district budgets.
- Ensure application of inflation to all elements in the funding formula. In particular, since 2008 the state share of special education funding has remained flat at \$41 million while contributions from the local taxpayer have increased from \$44 million to \$52 million. Judge Sherlock's 2008 opinion specifically noted that "State appropriations for special education have fallen far short of the growth in costs".
- Successfully defeat efforts to fund charter schools, tax credits, and vouchers with public funds at the expense of funds that would otherwise be committed to our public schools.
- Successfully defeat assaults against the Board of Public Education's accreditation standards and local district policy. Proposals for complicated and unworkable curriculum opt-outs, mandated presence of guns in schools, and attacks on the Board of Public Education's standards will all likely be on the agenda as they were in previous legislative sessions.
- Support new funding for early childhood education – studies continue to demonstrate that early childhood education and kindergarten readiness are linchpins in addressing the achievement gap. Collectively, we can ensure that early childhood education is implemented in a manner that honors local control and community ownership, and provides funding levels adequate to allow school districts to provide quality education for these students.