

# **ASBO INTERNATIONAL 2020–2021 LEGISLATIVE BELIEFS**

## **ABOUT ASBO INTERNATIONAL**

Founded in 1910, the Association of School Business Officials International (ASBO) is a nonprofit organization that, through its members and affiliates, represents approximately 30,000 school business professionals worldwide. ASBO International is committed to providing programs, services, and a global network that promote the highest standards in school business. Our members support student achievement through effective resource management in various areas ranging from finance and operations to food services and transportation.

School business officials are trustworthy education leaders who work tirelessly to ensure that the myriad financial and administrative operations necessary to keep schools running and provide safe learning environments do not negatively impact student learning. ASBO International members are committed to enhancing student achievement by effectively and efficiently managing educational resources, creating innovative school business management practices, and leading the profession by promoting the cost-effective use of taxpayer resources. As school business officials strive to ensure that taxpayer resources are utilized wisely in their communities, ASBO International is here to support them.

## **FEDERAL EDUCATION FUNDING IS LOWER THAN IT WAS IN FY2011**

With a wide and deep knowledge of school finance and operations, ASBO International is uniquely qualified to help federal officials and policymakers understand the enormous challenge of ensuring student success in a rapidly changing educational landscape where dwindling resources—federal, state, and local—are a continuous reality.

ASBO International is concerned about the lack of stability in school finance today. In the past, our members have relied on and sustained student learning with a necessary and welcomed infusion of federal resources. However, this has helped fill only part of the void created by the loss of state and local education funding since the Great Recession. More than a decade after the 2008 financial crisis, at least 22 states have yet to reach pre-recession education funding levels, and many states are vulnerable if another crisis occurs.

Sluggish economic recovery, increasing unfunded mandates, increasing accountability and rising labor, living, and health costs are only some of the challenges impeding districts from implementing reforms to improve student outcomes, reduce class sizes, increase staff compensation, and improve education equity. While recent federal investments in education are greatly appreciated, federal funding still falls below where it was in the 2011 fiscal year (FY) after adjusting for inflation. Yet, schools are tasked to provide more services for more students today with fewer actual dollars. Our nation still has a long way to go to meet society's educational needs, and states and schools require additional federal aid and support.

# ASBO INTERNATIONAL LEGISLATIVE BELIEFS STATEMENT

## 1. We believe targeted, robust federal funding with minimal administrative burden is an important part of a school system's revenue.

**We support** fiscally responsible federal investment in education to supplement and support local efforts to ensure all students have equitable educational opportunities. Federal education funding must be protected and be a priority within federal budget conversations; education funding must not be cut for other federal priorities.

**We support** that public dollars should fund public schools. Schools that receive public funding must play by the same rules for enrollment, academic standards, performance, equity, procurement, conflict of interest, accountability, and transparency. Privatization of education undermines our public school system and denies equitable educational opportunities for students. We oppose private school choice/voucher programs, which funnel taxpayer dollars away from public schools into private and/or parochial schools that are not held accountable to the same high standards.

**We support** increased federal funding for education programs authorized by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act (Perkins/CTE). Congress should fully fund formula grants that reflect its commitment to supporting historically disadvantaged students, including low-income, minority, English Learner, and special education students.

- We believe Congress should prioritize funding formula grant programs over competitive grants in its education agenda. Formula grants represent a more stable, predictable source of funding for school districts, which require fiscal and financial stability to undertake the ambitious reforms often proposed by competitive grant programs. We seek federal support to eliminate red tape, bureaucracy, and overly stringent mandates associated with applying for and reporting on the use of federal grant dollars. Simplifying and streamlining federal grant processes will encourage schools to apply for available funds and free up school staff time and resources to focus more on student learning.
- We believe Congress should fully fund IDEA at 40% of the national average per-pupil expenditure (NAPPE) to address extra costs incurred when educating students with special needs and to fulfill Congress' original promise to support students with disabilities. We support relaxing IDEA, Part B maintenance of effort (MOE) requirements so that districts have more flexibility in addressing this underfunded mandate by reducing investment in special education on the condition that more efficient ways of serving students with disabilities can be achieved. IDEA MOE requirements should conform to the MOE requirements under ESSA statute.
- We believe Congress should increase funding for ESSA Titles I, II, III, and IV formula grants. ESSA provides state and local leaders flexibility and autonomy over their classrooms, but their success will ultimately rely on how well ESSA programs are funded. While formula grants should take priority, we also support adequate funding for Titles II and IV

competitive grants for quality professional development, after-school and extracurricular activities, and other vital programs.

- We believe Congress should increase funding for Perkins/CTE state grants to support education programs that offer alternative pathways for students to succeed and ensure our nation has a highly qualified workforce.

**We support** preserving funding for and strengthening the federal E-Rate program to assist school communities with bridging the digital divide for those who lack reliable broadband access to effectively participate in and benefit from information technology for learning. We support expanding the list of eligible services for using E-Rate funds to address cybersecurity threats impacting schools and to improve digital equity and broadband access for students beyond the school building, at home and in their community.

## **2. We believe that federal funding and support are critical for schools to construct, maintain, and repair facilities, and to ensure that students have safe and healthy places to learn.**

**We support** a fiscally responsible federal infrastructure plan that incorporates K–12 schools into its broader agenda. Federal investment in K–12 infrastructure should include, but not be limited to, direct state and local funding; competitive grants; investing in partnerships to support projects (e.g., public/private (PPP), federal and state/local, etc.); restoring tax-credit QZABs/QSCBs and tax-exempt advance refunding bonds; and other innovative options to help schools construct, maintain, and repair facilities.

- We believe that school infrastructure and safety issues are inextricably linked; it is impossible to address one issue without addressing the other. Schools are charged with increasing responsibilities to protect student health and safety without receiving additional federal funding and support to accommodate new demands and emerging threats. Whether a school must improve facility conditions, increase physical or cyber security, or provide new learning spaces to meet personalized learning goals, these initiatives cost time and resources that most public school systems lack.
- We believe there are several areas of opportunity for the federal government to support schools in improving infrastructure and safety issues. 1) Addressing public and environmental health concerns (e.g., radon, lead, asbestos, mold, etc.); 2) Improving school safety and climate (e.g., hardening facilities, hiring and training staff, providing social and emotional learning for students, addressing cyberbullying, providing mental health support, etc.); and 3) Providing inclusive facilities to accommodate all students' educational needs (e.g., full-day PreK, CTE/vocational training, STEM classes and makerspaces, special education, etc.).

**We support** the reduction, simplification, and streamlining of grant application and reporting requirements for schools and districts to receive federal funding for K–12 infrastructure projects. Excessive administrative, paperwork, and compliance burdens relative to voluntary

grant applications often deter school districts from applying for financial assistance. We welcome any opportunity to work with federal agencies and other K–12 stakeholders to ensure infrastructure grants and requirements are accessible and easily navigable for applicants.

- We believe that the burdensome application process for FEMA’s Public Assistance Program must be streamlined to provide districts with quicker and easier access to desperately needed funds so that students may safely return to school after a disaster has occurred. FEMA’s strict procurement requirements inhibit recovery efforts when districts are challenged to find available contractors and must delay facility repairs to endure the time required to comply with competitive-bidding procurement rules. We also advise FEMA to accept whatever procurement method the state has adopted as a default.

### **3. We believe that schools require a sustainable nutrition program business model with minimal administrative burden that provides affordable, nutritious meals that students will enjoy.**

**We support** efforts by the federal government to reduce, simplify, and streamline regulations for child nutrition programs to reduce the administrative burdens and costs for managing school meal programs. We believe the federal government should play a supportive, flexible role in helping states and school districts comply with nutrition standards and offer quality non-regulatory guidance, technical support, and professional development for administering meal programs. We also believe the federal reimbursement rates for school meals should be increased to ensure school nutrition programs are financially sustainable.

**We support** having the federal government play a supportive rather than regulatory role in helping states and districts solve unpaid meal debt and “lunch shaming” issues rather than increasing regulations and restricting local autonomy. It is not the school district’s goal to shame students or their families if they incur a negative meal account balance, but rather to work with them to resolve unpaid debts.

- We believe the USDA and other federal agencies can provide non-regulatory guidance and resources to help states, districts, and schools develop fiscally sound and fair policies to recover costs, collect debt, eliminate stigmas from serving and eating free/reduced-price meals, and still ensure students have access to affordable and nutritious food.

**We oppose** nutrition reforms that would adversely affect the financial structure of, federal funding streams for, or student access to, child nutrition and school meal programs. This includes capping federal payments to states for school meal programs via block grants; increasing the eligibility threshold for schools and districts to enroll in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) program; and other reforms that would have adverse effects for students and districts regarding direct certification for school meal programs. We support a universal meal policy, provided that it would not harm eligibility for, and enrollment in, existing federal funding streams serving schools, and would fully cover costs associated with operating the program in schools.

- We believe that capping funding streams via state block grants will reduce funding for schools to administer meal programs (block grants would provide states fixed funding in lieu of federal reimbursements per each eligible meal served). Block grants do not provide states relief in the event of a recession, rising child poverty, increases in enrollment/meal program participation, and rising food prices and school meal costs.
- We believe that the CEP is an effective federal program that enables high-poverty schools and districts to provide meals to all students at no charge; improves meal program participation and efficiency; and reduces paperwork burdens for K–12 districts. A school or district is CEP-eligible to serve all students school meals at no charge if 40% or more of its students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals. We not only oppose any increases to this eligibility threshold, but support lowering it so that more low-income schools and students can access affordable and nutritious meals through the program.

#### **4. We believe that schools need adequate federal support, flexibility, and funding to implement federal healthcare regulations.**

**We support** federal efforts to increase the amount of funding and quality of training, technical support, and other guidance and resources to assist school systems with implementing healthcare regulations. We welcome any opportunity to work with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), other federal agencies, and K–12 stakeholders to improve the regulatory environment for school systems.

**We support** the reduction, simplification, and streamlining of current Affordable Care Act (ACA) regulations to reduce the administrative burden and costs to school systems to comply with the law. We support changing the definition of a full-time employee (FTE) who qualifies for health insurance from an individual who works an average of 30 hours/week to 35 hours/week. We encourage the federal government to work with schools on ACA employer mandate requirements, especially regarding insurance coverage for substitute staff and related penalties/fines for when coverage has not been provided.

**We oppose** healthcare reforms that would adversely affect the financial structure or funding streams of the federal-state Medicaid and Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP). This includes limiting federal payments to states via per-capita caps based on enrollment or block grants, neither of which provide states relief in the event of a recession, public health crisis, or other emergency.

- We believe that capping or reducing Medicaid and/or CHIP funding to states hinders states’ ability to reimburse Medicaid-eligible service providers, including hospitals, clinics, and schools. Schools rely on \$4 billion annually in Medicaid dollars to provide vital student health services to children, especially those with disabilities and from low-income families that cannot afford access to these services elsewhere.

## **ASBO INTERNATIONAL AND OUR MEMBERS ARE WILLING PARTNERS**

ASBO International and our members want to offer our experience, expertise, and interest in creating a world-class education system for all students. We welcome the opportunity to work with federal policymakers in meeting the significant financial and operational challenges that schools face.

### **ASBO International Legislative Advisory Committee (LAC)**

#### **Chair:**

- Sharie Lewis, CPA, Director of Business Services and Operations, Parkrose School District, OR

#### **Vice Chair:**

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- Kelley Kitchen, Executive Director of Finance, Goshen Community Schools, IN
- Martin Romine, SFO, Chief Financial Officer, Zuni Public School District 89, NM
- Jeffrey Hollamon, CPA, Associate Superintendent/Chief Financial Officer, Onslow County BOE, NC
- Trisha Schock, Executive Director for Administrative Services, North Central ESD 171, WA

#### **Legal Experts:**

- Christopher Borreca, Attorney and Founding Partner, Thompson & Horton LLP, TX
- Jay Himes, CAE, Leadership Advisor, Pennsylvania ASBO, PA

#### **Affiliate Executive Director Group (AEDG) Liaisons:**

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- Molly McGee Hewitt, CAE, Executive Director, California ASBO, CA

#### **Board Liaison:**

- Thomas Wohlleber, CSRM, ASBO International Immediate Past President, AZ

#### **CEO/Executive Director:**

- David Lewis, ASBO International Executive Director, VA

**Questions?** Contact Elleka Yost, ASBO International Government Affairs & Communications Manager, at 866.682.2729 x7065 or [eyost@asbointl.org](mailto:eyost@asbointl.org).