

38TH DISTRICT
STATE SENATOR
LINDSEY M. WILLIAMS

SENATE BOX 203038
THE STATE CAPITOL
HARRISBURG, PA 17120-3038
717-787-6538
FAX: 717-787-8625

5000 MCKNIGHT ROAD • SUITE 405
PITTSBURGH, PA 15237
412-364-0469
FAX: 412-364-0928

1826 UNION AVENUE
NATRONA HEIGHTS, PA 15065
724-224-2131
FAX: 724-224-2145



Senate of Pennsylvania

COMMITTEES

EDUCATION, DEMOCRATIC CHAIR
GAMES & FISHERIES
LABOR & INDUSTRY
URBAN AFFAIRS & HOUSING
VETERANS AFFAIRS &
EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

EMAIL: SenatorLindseyWilliams@pasenate.com
WEBSITE: www.SenatorLindseyWilliams.com
FACEBOOK: @SenWilliamsPA
TWITTER: @SenWilliamsPA
INSTAGRAM: @SenWilliamsPA

February 7, 2022

The Honorable Tom Wolf
Governor of Pennsylvania
225 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Governor Wolf,

As Minority Chair of the Senate Education Committee, I ask you to prioritize bold investments in public education as part of your FY 2022-23 budget proposal. These investments – which have been hallmarks of your budget proposals – remain more critical than ever.

Pennsylvania is sitting on a once in a lifetime opportunity to invest federal funds and a surplus of state funds directly into the next generation – these are our future doctors, nurses, teachers, engineers, counselors. We must seize this moment. The last three years have shown us that our schools are in many ways the keystone of our society – and for a better society, we must invest in our public education system.

As I shared with your staff when we discussed education budget priorities last month, I urge you to propose robust investments in the following:

Mental Health Supports in School: Even before the pandemic, the Safe2Say report illustrated that a lack of school supports that respond to students' social, emotional and learning needs is a universal factor undermining student success and wellness. When we read that the most common Safe2Say tips were about bullying, cutting, suicidal thoughts or anxiety, it illuminates the tremendous need for more counselors, social workers and trusted adults, trained to respond with trauma-informed, culturally relevant interventions. Focused investments in mental health supports will help ensure that these critical resources are available to the students and educators who need them most.

Charter School Law Reform: PASBO's 2022 School District Budget report confirms what we've long known – stemming the tide of unchecked and growing mandated charter school costs is critical for our schools' stability – and absolutely necessary if we are going to prevent or limit property tax increases, especially for our seniors and low-income communities. SB27, my bill with Senator Brewster, should be the starting point for any negotiations around Charter School Law reform.

Career and Technical Education: Career and Technical Education prepares students to enter the commonwealth's work force, and our communities depend on having these highly-skilled

students ready for the jobs of today and tomorrow. Creating pathways for students to enter these family sustaining professions must start in K-12 and should include opportunities to earn certifications and college credit through dual enrollment and partnerships with unions, trades, and business to reduce the barriers to entry and costs to students.

Community Colleges & PASSHE: Collaboration and coordinated investment among our community colleges, technical schools, and PA State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) schools will create a Pennsylvania system of public higher education that properly funds our institutions and reduces student borrowing costs.

Student Loan Forgiveness: Current school staffing shortages have an enormous price tag and they take a tremendous toll on students, staff, and parents. Students in overcrowded classrooms can't get individualized attention they need to succeed academically, no matter how hard educators work. I will soon be introducing student loan relief legislation to help attract and retain the critical school staff and mental health professionals that Pennsylvania desperately needs.

Given the recent recommendations from the Independent Fiscal Office, it is important that there are no increases to the educational tax credit programs without an increase in transparency and data collection necessary to determine if the programs substantially enhance educational opportunities available to all students. We must also continue to fight efforts masquerading as transparency legislation that seek to remove local control from our school boards and undermine the teaching of accurate history and cultural and racial competence to our students.

Lastly, I stand with my colleagues in the Senate Democratic Caucus as we call for significant investments in these and other areas of public education, including the specific requests communicated by Senator Schwank for early childhood education and Senator Saval for education infrastructure.

I look forward to your budget proposal setting the high-water mark for education funding and I will continue to use my role as Senate Education Chair to champion these important investments for the benefit of our Commonwealth's students, educators, families, and workforce.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lindsey M. Williams".

Senator Lindsey M. Williams
Pennsylvania's 38th Senatorial District

cc: Senator Jay Costa, Minority Leader
Senator Vincent J. Hughes, Democratic Chair, Appropriations Committee