



# ASBO INTERNATIONAL

## 2019–2020 LEGISLATIVE BELIEFS STATEMENT

### 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.

### STATES & SCHOOLS ARE STILL RECOVERING FROM THE RECESSION

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 as states and schools continue recovering from the Global Recession. The 2008 financial crisis, coupled with federal fiscal austerity measures from the Budget Control Act and sequestration, have had detrimental effects on federal education funding, which has adversely affected state and local funding.

While Congress' recent education investments in federal FY2018 and FY2019 are greatly appreciated, overall education funding is still below where it was in FY2011 after adjusting for inflation. Yet today, schools are tasked to provide more services for more students with fewer dollars than they had in 2011. Thus, our nation still has a long way to go to not only help states and schools recover from the recession but also meet society's educational needs today. As a result, our states and schools require more federal aid and support.

## ASBO INTERNATIONAL LEGISLATIVE BELIEFS

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

**We support** a permanent, bipartisan, and fiscally responsible solution for the federal government to resolve sequestration and remove harmful budget caps that limit investment in education.

**We support** having Congress play a primary role in ensuring all students have an equal opportunity to a quality education. We support increasing 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 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. We oppose private school choice/voucher programs that funnel taxpayer dollars away from public schools into private/parochial schools that are not held accountable to the same standards.
- 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 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 is 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 FCC 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.

**2. We believe that federal funding and support are critical for helping schools construct, maintain, and repair facilities and ensuring 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., PPPs, 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 their facilities.

- We believe that school infrastructure and safety issues are inextricably linked; it is impossible to address one issue without the other. Schools are charged with more responsibilities to protect student health and safety while not having the funding or support needed to achieve these goals. Whether a school needs to improve facility conditions, increase security, or provide learning spaces to meet students' needs, these initiatives cost time and resources that most 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 emotional care for students, 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 guidance, technical support, and professional development for administering meal programs.

**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 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 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 ITS MEMBERS ARE WILLING PARTNERS

ASBO International and its 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, Director of Business Services and Operations, Parkrose School District, OR

#### **Vice Chair:**

- Karen Smith, Assistant Superintendent of Business and Financial Services, Cypress-Fairbanks Independent School District, TX

#### **Practitioners:**

- Anthony N. Dragona, Ed.D., RSBA, School Business Administrator, Union City Public Schools, NJ
- Kelley Kitchen, Director of Finance, Goshen Community Schools, IN
- Dan Pyan, Director of Finance and Operations, South Washington County Schools Independent School District 833, MN
- Martin Romine, Chief Financial Officer, Zuni Public School District 89, NM
- Ryan Stechsulte, Treasurer/Chief Financial Officer, Toledo City School District, OH

#### **Legal Experts:**

- Christopher Borreca, Attorney and Founding Partner, Thompson & Horton LLP, TX
- Jay Himes, Executive Director, Pennsylvania ASBO, PA

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

- Dennis Costerison, Executive Director, Indiana ASBO, IN
- Molly McGee Hewitt, Executive Director, California ASBO, CA

#### **Board Liaison:**

- Charles Peterson, ASBO International Immediate Past President, PA

#### **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).