



Thank you for allowing Idaho PTA to address the Senate Education Committee. We appreciate the opportunity to share with you our priorities, some of our accomplishments & what is important to our members to further the education of the students in Idaho.

Our top priorities this year & every year is the overall well being of children & students in our state. Our theme this year is to "Re-Connect" The cornerstone of our organization is our volunteers. Since in person learning was limited in 2020 & 2021 our organization saw decreases in membership & volunteer hours. Now that in person learning is back, our goal is to re-connect with parents, teachers & students so that we may continue to volunteer in our schools to help students succeed.

Today is our annual Advocacy Day at the Capitol. We have several guest speakers who are here to help educate our members about digital safety, learn about proposed legislation for Full Day Kindergarten & focus groups with the Department of Education to continue to improve communication between decision makers & families.

We have Officer David Gomez a Boise County Resource Officer who shares his wisdom daily on social media to help educate parents on how to look for red flags to keep students safe in a digital world. Today, he will also address his view of student mental health which he sees in his school every day. If you have a chance, please look at his FaceBook page, it is eye opening to see what is really lurking out there enticing our kids.

Beth Oppenheimer & Jonny Carkin from the Idaho AEYC will be informing our membership on proposed legislation for Full Day Kindergarten.

Kestrel West will update our membership on all education legislative priorities for the 2022 session & which ones will affect our students sooner than later.

The culinary students from SkyView High School have prepared & will be serving lunch on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor rotunda today at noon. Please join us for a remarkable meal. For many of these students, it is the first time at our State's Capitol. They will be dressed in their whites & chef hat. Any time these culinary students can participate in a catering event will help them prepare for the challenges of the food service industry in the real world. We are also very grateful to Mt. America Credit Union who has provided a grant to cover the costs for food & transportation.

Our afternoon session we will hear about proposed legislation entitled "Parental Rights Protection of Minors Act" from Senator Kevin Cook which we have endorsed. This proposed legislation is designed to protect minors from accessing or downloading pornographic content by reducing access on an electronic device.

Digital security is very important to the PTA. National PTA just announced an expansion of its PTA Connected Programs through a new alliance with Discord, an online voice, video & text communication service. Discord will collaborate with National PTA on digital safety resources & events designed to elevate youth voices & foster shared understanding among teens, caregivers & educators. Our PTA goal is to support programs & legislation to keep our children safe on-line while keeping a connection & a safe space for personal expression.

We are also meeting with the Department of Education to conduct a focus group with our members hosted by Superintendent Sharri Ybarra & Marilyn Whitney. The 3 questions the Dept of Education are asking today are as follow:

- 1) The Advanced Opportunities Program-are students using the \$4,125 or are they planning to use it? What more can the DOE do to support college/career exploration.
- 2) Do you feel like you & your peers lost ground academically & socially during the pandemic? If so, what can schools do to help support you? What specifically would be helpful?
- 3) Open ended discussion-hearing feedback by members & students

Even through a pandemic, PTA has had some great accomplishments this past year: National PTA awarded \$80,000 nationwide in sponsored grants in 2021 & Idaho had 4 recipients this year.

- Skyview Band Boosters PTA in Nampa was awarded \$1000 from the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids for promoting the Tobacco Prevention Campaign. This campaign is specific to 6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade classes educating students on the dangers of tobacco products including the use of e-cigarettes & other flavored tobacco.
- Mosaic PTA in Caldwell was awarded \$1000 from the Families Propelling Our World Grants sponsored by Huntington Ingalls Industries. This grant connects families with engaging STEM activities which offer easy & fun design challenges for them to do together, demystify engineering for students & inspire kids to pursue careers in STEM.
- Seven Oak Elementary in Eagle was awarded \$1000 to co-host a Math Night with Mathnasium. Mathnasium is an American education brand & supplemental math learning franchise consisting of over 1,000 learning centers all over the world. By using the provided National PTA STEM + Families Math Night resources, this program engages students & families to actively participate in STEM & math activities with the goal to enhance positive family engagement.
- Andrus Elementary PTA in Boise & Webster PTA in Lewiston each were awarded \$1000 from NortonLifeLock for a Smart Talk Grant. Smart Talk is an interactive tool created by National PTA & NortonLifeLock which walks families through a series of guided digital safety questions, then creates a personalized family agreement for how technology will be used at home.

From a state level in 2020-2021, Idaho PTA awarded over \$26,000 to Idaho schools during our Better Together Covid-19 Relief Grants Drive. 17 PTA units across the state were awarded money to help pay for programs typically fundraised during the school year & were unable due to school closures & distancing protocols. PTA awarded grants ranging from \$400-\$3000 to help pay for items including Covid Supplies, Food Pantry Programs, technology, internet access for families & high school math tutors to help students keep up with the rigor of school work.

On a National Level, PTA federal legislative priorities include Promoting Safe, Supportive & Inclusive Practices in Schools for All Students, the Re-authorization of the Child Nutrition Act, Increasing Federal Investment in Public Education, Federal Investments in School Infrastructure, & Supporting Sensible Solutions to Gun Violence. I will be going to Washington DC in June during our National Convention to meet with our Idaho legislators not only to brag about our members & what they are doing in Idaho to help students in school but to also discuss support of these initiatives from National PTA.

Here in Idaho, Idaho PTA would like to address the State to fully fund Full Day Kindergarten. In reviewing my remarks to this committee, PTA has addressed this issue several times over the years - specifically with me in 2018 & 2019, so this is not a new ask or new priority of Idaho PTA. We have supported a State funded Full Day Kindergarten for a long time.

There has been quite a bit of public discussion on the inequality of the State funded ½ day Kindergarten & tuition based Full Day Kindergarten. Not all schools districts offer either or both which raises the issue of access for all regardless of a families' financial position. Each year, more school districts, hearing the needs from parents are adding free Full Day Kindergarten & are using mixed financial resources to financially support the program. By having the State fund Full Day Kindergarten frees up these district resources to better serve their entire school community & offer more literacy & school programs to the benefit of all students.

The best thing to give parents in regard to the education of our children is options. Giving parents options gives students an opportunity to succeed in a positive & nurturing environment which they may or may not have at home & in a way that is not a financial strain to the entire family. By giving access to a free, Full Day Kindergarten is another tool parents can use to help educate their child to their full potential. Full Day Kindergarten gives our teachers & students time to focus on reading, writing as well as build social & emotional skills. The better our children are prepared for 1st grade, the better it will help our students from falling behind their peers, build self esteem & create confidence in a social setting of a school & at home.

I will stand for questions.