CONSTITUENT WHITE PAPER ON SOUTH CAROLINA SCHOOL REFORM

Lowcountry Indivisible Education Team and Stand For Students (Bluffton / Hilton Head)

Our organizations place excellent public school systems high on the list of values inherent in our respective missions, and our thousands of members support this important value. We offer the following 7 items for legislators to take into serious consideration as debate begins anew on school reform in 2020.

1. Cost of a basic education for each K – 12 students in South Carolina ($7574 according to SC Revenue and Fiscal Affairs) must be appropriated to each school district by the state. This amount is the cost of providing a basic education to students and is the responsibility of the state.
2. Rural school districts, districts with high levels of poverty and low wealth districts should receive additional funding to address higher costs in providing a quality education for all students (in addition to a lower student / teacher ratio for students in poverty). In addition, 28 other states add a “sparsity weight” for districts with low student population density, which makes up for more transportation, smaller schools and smaller classes. This should be considered when addressing school reform.
3. Teacher salaries should be improved to meet (at a minimum) the Southeastern US average.
4. Teacher recruitment and working conditions must be improved in order to provide a highly qualified teacher for every classroom. For example, The Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention & Advancement at Winthrop University should be fully funded and expanded to provide adequate assistance to all school districts in SC.
5. School reform legislation should address the current multi-layered, inefficient distribution of funds. The Senate Finance Subcommittee on Education is reviewing a proposal from the Office of Revenue and Fiscal Affairs to roll all state funding sources into one, which provides an appropriate blueprint to address this issue.
6. Public money raised by the state’s citizens should flow only to public education and not be channeled to selective charter schools or private schools.
7. While school district consolidation does not save significant amounts of funds, service sharing across districts is a model to consider within and among counties. Examples could include professional development, food services, procurement and online classes.

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