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Dear Washington County PTA Leader,

We have been informed about the recent Washington County Board of Education proposed policy change that may impact Washington County PTA. The Maryland PTA Board of Directors wants you to know that we stand together with you in support of maintaining PTA as an independent entity dedicated to serving the needs of children in Washington County.

As the state's oldest and largest child advocacy organization founded in 1915, Maryland PTA is a powerful voice for all children, a relevant resource for families, schools and communities and a strong advocate for public education who together fulfill the mission of educational success of children and the promotion of family engagement in schools. All Maryland PTAs are registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit associations. As a PTA member, your Board of Education is aware that we volunteer thousands of hours every day to ensure that all students reach their full potential to be college and career ready. PTA also provides hours of training to parents and families every day to enable them to become fully-engaged at their students' schools and in their student's educational success. PTA is open to anyone who wants to be involved and make a difference for the education, health, and welfare of children and youth. Maryland PTA is committed to improving the lives and experiences of children in Maryland regardless of their financial ability.

We know that there are several meetings planned to discuss the Board of Education proposed policy. **We strongly encourage you to participate in the public business meeting to be held on August 23, 2016 at 6 p.m. and to file comments on how this policy change will impact your PTA by September 12, 2016.** We will stand together with you to support maintaining PTAs as a separate entity in Washington County. We are happy to help give you any background information that you may need and to help assist you in any way. Maryland PTA Board members will be at that meeting and will support your efforts. Attached, is a one-page document drafted by Policy and Procedures Chair, Michael Sedgwick, that speaks to many of the proposed changes in the policy. Feel free to utilize this document if you wish.

We want you to know that Maryland PTA takes very seriously the effort to we actively train all our PTA local leaders at all levels on PTA finances, leadership and officer training so that they can run their local PTA units efficiently. Financial training at the Maryland PTA 101st Annual Convention will include a panel on PTA Finances which will include our State PTA Treasurer, Alexandria Briggs Blake as well as Manuel Hamme from Knight Insurance.

Maryland PTA does great things across the state. Maryland PTA, as well as National PTA, our chartering organization, support parents, teachers and school leaders in our mission for growth and achievement of students. Employers also benefit when students graduate ready to join the workforce. Throughout the year, Maryland PTA spent time holding school-based programs to inform parents about assessments their students would be taking throughout the year. We support state-wide Arts in Education Reflections programs at the local, state and national level that support arts in the schools. This year, Maryland PTA proudly recognized our Outstanding Interpretation National PTA Award winner, who competed against 300,000 applicants across the United States.

As President of Maryland PTA and as State Treasurer of Maryland PTA, we want you to know that we support you and we stand ready to assist in any way possible to answer any questions you may have.

Best Regards,

Elizabeth Ysla Leight
State President
Maryland PTA
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Maryland PTA Structure and Function

PTA's mission is to make every child's potential a reality by engaging and empowering families and communities to advocate for all children.

Local PTA Units:

- Are chartered by Maryland PTA when they assume the responsibility of the carrying out the PTA Purposes and Mission.
- Are self-governing;

- Plan programs, events, forums, projects and legislative testimony to meet the needs of children and youth in their local communities;
- Are concerned about and study the needs of all children;
- Are composed of individual PTA members who enroll at the local level and automatically become part of Maryland PTA and the National PTA.
- PTA's are not supporting organizations, clubs or booster groups for any school. They are separate legal entities which further the PTA mission of providing parents, guardians and families with a powerful voice to speak on behalf of children. PTA's work in harmony with school personnel, but they are not part of any school and are not subject to directions or control in any manner by school administration.
- The primary focus of PTA should be the PTA Purposes, and not fund raising. PTA's may raise funds to meet their budgets, but they should be certain that they are raising funds for appropriate PTA exponents (?). When planning the year's activities, PTA should use the 3-to-1 rule. For every fund raising activity, there should be at least three non-fund-raising projects or advocacy initiatives aimed at helping parents, guardians and children for the school.

The Principal and the PTA as Partners

The principal and the PTA must not only understand their respective responsibilities, but each others. They must set goals and work cooperatively to achieve them. They must respect each other's opinion, not expect automatic approval from each other and not withdraw support if opinions differ. As partners, it means reaching out to all parents and school staffs to help all children and youth reach their full potential.

PTA's Rights and Responsibilities

The National PTA Board of Directors has stated that all PTAs have certain organizational rights as follows:

- To function as an independent, nonpartisan child advocacy group.
- To seek enactment of policies and practices that protects children and youth.
- To participate within school board policy in the setting of school goals and assist in the review of teaching material.
- To participate in making decisions affecting policies, rules and regulations.
- To meet with appropriate school officials to discuss matters of mutual concern affecting children.