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TO: Senate Education Committee Members  
SUBJECT: Mandate Relief  
DATE: March 21, 2011

**PSBA SUPPORTS BROAD MANDATE RELIEF**

The Pennsylvania School Boards Association (PSBA) commends Senators Piccola and Dinniman and the members of the Senate Education Committee for prioritizing mandate relief for school districts and taking the first steps towards necessary legislation relieving school districts from state mandates that divert valuable dollars from educational programs. We think this is a strong first step to instituting a full and continual review of state mandates.

Unfunded and underfunded mandates continue to hinder school district budgets across Pennsylvania. In these challenging economic times, it is essential that the Commonwealth take a strong look at the genesis of the mandates it has imposed on local school districts, re-evaluate their purposes, and find ways to reduce and, more importantly, eliminate the mandates that do not allow school districts to operate effectively and efficiently.

For years, PSBA has been championing on its members' behalf to bring an end to unfunded and underfunded mandates. Over the years, there have been positive developments on this front. The mandate waiver program found in Act 16 of 2000, the creation of a School Construction Working Group and a Task Force on School Cost Reduction are just a few.

Toward that end, PSBA launched the FREE (Focusing Resources on Educational Expenses) campaign last legislative session that included the introduction of many bills dealing with bid limits, pension reform, economic furloughs, the Separations Act, Prevailing Wage and transfer of entities protections. Some of those bills are included in the Piccola mandate relief protection package. This legislative session, PSBA has renewed its legislative effort to seek reintroduction of those legislative bills plus seeks to incorporate a broad mandate suspension process driven by school districts. This campaign called FreePlus recognizes that school districts are very diverse and state-imposed mandates have a variable impact. Accordingly, PSBA hopes to advance a mandate suspension bill which is broad and allows greater flexibility for suspension of innumerable mandates by districts.

PSBA supports a majority of the bills being considered by Senator Piccola and other members of his committee with only limited exceptions. It hopes that the committee's efforts will be followed by relief from the Prevailing Wage Act, the Separations Act and other collective bargaining practices that hold the potential to generate cost savings.