

SCHOOL FEES
Position Statement
Adopted Wednesday, February 13, 2019

Article X. Section 2 of the Utah Constitution provides that public elementary school shall be free and that secondary schools shall be free, unless the Legislature authorizes the imposition of fees. Audits by the Utah State Board of Education and the Office of the Legislative Auditor General show “widespread and varied violations by the Utah State Board of Education, school districts, high schools, and charter schools” in the areas of oversight and control, transparency, and student access to public education in regards to school fees. (A Performance Audit of Secondary School Fees, September 2018, OLAG)

First and foremost, “Utah PTA urges the legislature to make public education revenue allocations and funding effort a high priority. We also encourage the legislature to adequately fund critical education needs, including but not limited to, class size reduction, teacher salaries, technology, textbooks and supplies ...” (EDU 2010-2 Education Funding)

We recognize that current education funding does not cover the costs of all curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular activities within our schools but are concerned with the overwhelmingly increasing fees being charged to students and families across the state.

Utah PTA supports school fees legislation and Board rule that provides a clear definition of a fee, requires the fee to be equal or less than the expense incurred by the LEA (Local Education Agency), and holds LEAs accountable for incorrectly charging school fees. We also support legislation or Board rule that requires an LEA governing board to adopt a fee policy and fee schedule which includes public input and is available to students and families at registration.

While we support legislation and/or Board Rule that prohibits an LEA from charging a fee for a textbook; and other activities related to the school day, including, locker rentals. We are concerned about the additional costs that may be incurred by LEAs who currently charge for such expenses and continue to urge “the legislature to ... adequately fund critical education needs.”

Utah PTA supports legislation and/or Board rule that takes into consideration students who do not qualify for waivers, but do not have the means to participate in activities because of the cost of related fees. We support group fundraising policies that provide opportunities for students of all economic levels to participate.

As current statute requires that when a fee is charged that “adequate waivers or other provisions are available to ensure that no student is denied the opportunity to participate because of an inability to pay the required fee.” (Utah Code, 53G-7-504. Waiver of fees), Utah PTA advocates for legislative funding designated to reimburse districts for a specified percentage of their fee waiver costs. (EDU 2001-1 Reimbursement of Fee Waivers in Utah School Districts)