

## 2021 LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY PRIORITY

### HEALTH & WELLNESS

The education of children to a great degree depends on their overall health. Our public schools must help children learn the value of balanced nutrition, sensible exercise, and good overall health.

North Carolina PTA will support, encourage and advocate for policies at all levels of government as well as for school programs that help to maintain the health and wellness of all children and policies that will bring health care to families who are in need of it, especially low-income families, rural families, Black, LatinX and immigrant families, along with those who have been the most disproportionately harmed by the pandemic.

North Carolina PTA will support initiatives as well as encourage and advocate for legislation and policies that:

- Support the medical and mental health of all students K-12 with innovative funding solutions for increased non-teaching staff, including but not limited to nurses, counselors, psychologists, and social workers in schools, provided in-person or according to the best practices in telehealth access.
- Close the “coverage gap” by accepting federal funds to expand the NC Medicaid program.
- Merge the NC Health Choice program with NC Medicaid. This step would reduce administrative duplication, and ensure continuous, quality coverage for enrolled children – particularly those with special health care needs.
- **Recommendation:** Address student mental health, suicide prevention, and physical health needs by appropriating at least \$10M to decrease the dire shortage of school nurses in North Carolina.

Additionally, COVID-19 health is unlike any health crisis that has been experienced in our state and country before. The effects of financial uncertainty and social isolation are taking a toll on families across the state of North Carolina. Addressing the diverse needs of our state’s most negatively impacted populations is critical to ensuring that we all can make a strong recovery.

The measures we recommend will increase access to health care for those who need it most right now.

- Young children with special health care needs
- Youth in need of crisis support
- The more than one million North Carolinians – including hundreds of thousands of parents and caregivers who are currently weathering this pandemic with no health coverage.