



Communities
In Schools®

Eastern Pennsylvania

LEGISLATIVE AGENDA & POLICY PRINCIPLES



CIS of Eastern PA envisions a future in which every student, regardless of race, zip code, or socioeconomic background has a community of support that empowers them to reach their full potential.

Communities In Schools of Eastern Pennsylvania, Inc.

Lehigh Valley: 739. N 12th Street. Allentown, PA 18102 / Berks County: 2 Woodland Road, Wyomissing, PA 19610
www.ciseasternpa.org / 484-834-8830



Communities
In Schools®

Eastern Pennsylvania

OUR LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY HISTORY

As the nation's largest organization dedicated to empowering students to stay in school and on a path to a brighter future, advocacy is just one way we ensure that all kids have the tools to realize their potential. From our beginnings, public policy has been central to our mission.

We are, at our core, an advocate for equity. Our founder, Bill Milliken, dedicated his life to advocating for disenfranchised youth. His direct work with the Carter, Reagan, H.W. Bush and Clinton administrations helped grow CIS into the national organization it is today.

Since our local affiliate incorporation in 1983, CIS of Eastern Pennsylvania (previously CIS of the Lehigh Valley and before that Cities in Schools of Bethlehem) has advocated for strong investments in our young people.

WE ADVOCATE FOR POLICIES THAT DELIVER THESE FIVE ESSENTIALS:

- 1 A ONE-ON-ONE RELATIONSHIP WITH A CARING ADULT
- 2 A SAFE PLACE TO LEARN AND GROW
- 3 A HEALTHY START AND A HEALTHY FUTURE
- 4 A MARKETABLE SKILL TO USE UPON GRADUATION
- 5 A CHANCE TO GIVE BACK TO PEERS AND COMMUNITY

CIS of Eastern PA advocates that additional resources be made available to strengthen community development efforts and provide support to communities struggling to respond to crises such as the opioid epidemic, issues of school safety, and other traumatic events.

EQUITABLE OPPORTUNITIES

To set the stage for student success, we advocate for legislative changes that ensure equity is appropriately represented in all public policymaking across all policy areas outlined in this document.

Together with our partners, we urge federal and state policymakers to invest in education and related programs that support the health and wellness of young people. Therefore, we weigh in when these resources are inadequate or distributed inequitably.

We know it matters how public funds are spent and we encourage policymakers to invest in what works. To that end, we support the use of data and evidence in policymaking and encourage lawmakers to prioritize funding for evidence-based programs, so we can make sure these resources are invested wisely.

When government leaders invest in evidence-based programs, we can improve outcomes for all students while being good stewards of public dollars.

CIS of Eastern PA advocates for an increased percentage of the PA Education Budget to be directed through the PA Fair Funding Formula

PA FAIR FUNDING FORMULA

We support funding that better addresses the educational inequities of our most challenged districts.

In 2015, the PA General Assembly took an important first step toward making public education more equitable by adopting a permanent funding formula to benefit all students.

The formula provides distributions using a dynamic student count, and weights funding based on student poverty, non-English proficiency, relative district wealth and relative tax capacity.

While adopting the PA Fair Funding Formula was a step in the right direction, we believe that an increased percentage of the PA Education Budget run through this formula (currently <15%) would significantly decrease the current educational inequities.

Funding Resources:

- Pennsylvania Department of Education

CIS of Eastern PA
advocates to
eliminate the
School to Prison
Pipeline

ENDING THE SCHOOL TO PRISON PIPELINE

The School-to-Prison Pipeline is one of the most urgent challenges in education today.

We believe that every child, whatever their color, background or zip code, has the right to learn in a supportive environment that respects their humanity, upholds their dignity, and responds fairly to mistakes and missteps. Increasingly, the punitive approaches of the modern criminal justice system have seeped into our schools, serving to remove children from mainstream educational environments and funnel them onto a one-way path toward prison. Historical inequities, such as concentrated poverty, and racial disparities in law enforcement, all feed the pipeline.

CIS of Eastern PA serves the population highly impacted by the School to Prison Pipeline. We believe our students deserve access to high quality education in culturally competent environments. We are deeply committed to removing all barriers that keep students from being successful.

CIS of Eastern PA
advocates for policies
that create, reinforce,
and strengthen
opportunities for
young people to
build developmental
relationships with
caring adults.

INTEGRATED STUDENT SUPPORTS

We support evidence-based approaches, like integrated student supports, that are grounded in youth development research and the science of brain development.

CIS of Eastern PA provides ISS in more than 20 schools (elementary, middle and high schools) in the Lehigh Valley and Berks County. Our wrap-around supports address needs of the whole child especially the non-academic barriers that our students face every day.

Funding Resources:

- Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE)
- Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD)
- ESSA School Improvement Strategy
- Title I and Title IV (School Districts/Federal)

CIS of Eastern PA advocates for strong investments in positive school climates from all levels of government, and for state and federal policies that support and encourage the coordination and integration of school-based services that keep students physically and mentally healthy.

AFTER SCHOOL & SUMMER PROGRAMMING

Outside of School programming is a tremendous need in resource-deprived schools and districts. CIS supports safe after-school & summer programming that includes academic supports, enrichment activities, physical activity, snack/meals, college and career preparation, and transportation.

Funding Resources:

- 21st Century Funding (State/Federal)

COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

CIS is a participant and leader in the United Way Community School initiative. In this model, the school becomes a community hub where community resources are strategically brought into the school to address academic and non-academic challenges. These resources include basic needs, attendance supports, health and mental health services, and academic supports.

Funding Resources:

- US Department of Education grants (Federal)
- Pennsylvania Department of Education (State)

EVERY DAY ATTENDANCE

For students to excel in school, they need to attend every day and be ready to learn. This initiative focuses on chronic absenteeism and seeks to address students' core needs.

Funding Resources:

- TANF/ Truancy Funding (County)

CIS of Eastern PA advocates for job training, college exploration and persistence, and workplace learning opportunities for all students.

COLLEGE & CAREER READINESS

The CCR initiative is focused on equipping students with college and career related awareness, skills, and job-related experiences during their high school years to better prepare them to enter college and the workforce. We advocate for programs like our CIS Allentown ReEngagement Center that work with former out-of-school youth to complete their high school education, and lead them into career and college pathways.

Through initiatives that support college persistence and completion, and high-quality career and technical education programs aligned to industry demands, students can build the skills they need for success after graduation. We encourage state and federal policymakers to improve access to college and career exploration programs in earlier grades so that all students can start high school with a plan for the future. In addition, we encourage the integration of social, emotional, and academic instruction in schools so that students can learn the interpersonal skills needed for success after graduation.

Funding Resources:

- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) (Local and County)