



KEA Legislative Budget Priorities 2021 Kentucky General Assembly

KEA's priorities for the 2021 legislative session are: securing increased funding for public schools, including a meaningful increase in the SEEK formula; fully funding the state's contributions to TRS and the other public pension systems; and supporting proposed pay increases for all of Kentucky's educators, both certified and classified.

The General Assembly must do better than maintain the status quo

The impacts of the global pandemic have adversely affected every sector of Kentucky's economy, causing financial ruin and hardship for many of the Commonwealth's most vulnerable citizens and their children. More than ever, Kentucky is relying on its public schools to educate, feed, and physically and emotionally support every student, regardless of their zip code. Faced with that reality, now is the time for the General Assembly to fully fund its constitutional obligation to establish and maintain a strong system of public schools. Governor Beshear released a budget proposal that focused on economic recovery by prioritizing public education funding and making new investments in our Commonwealth.

However, instead of embracing the opportunity offered by the Governor's proposed budget, the Kentucky House and Senate each passed "continuation" budget bills that are now in conference committee. The "continuation" approach misses the mark, because it simply maintains the status quo and pads the "rainy day fund" instead of taking bold steps to improve Kentucky's economy and lift the circumstances of all its citizens.

Among the investments proposed in Governor Beshear's budget that are not included in a continuation budget:

- *A modest increase in per-pupil SEEK funding*
- *Full funding for the state's required contributions to all public pension systems, including the Teachers' Retirement System*
- *Funding the state's portion of health insurance coverage for teacher retirees under the age of 65*
- *\$11 million for textbooks*
- *\$5 million to support pre-school in low income areas*
- *\$100 million in new school construction*
- *\$50 million for "Last Mile" broadband access*
- *\$3.1 million in needs based loan forgiveness for teachers*
- *76 new social workers*
- *\$1,000 raise for all certified and classified educators*



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With additional revenue from various federal relief packages the final budget could and should include:

- Funding for school counselors and mental health professionals as mandated by SB1(2019)
- Enhanced funding for access to necessary community mental and physical health services
- Additional investments in Kentucky's infrastructure to ensure the safety of the roads and bridges students travel each school day

An adequate public education budget will include the following:

RESPONSIBLY INCREASE REVENUE

- *Close loopholes, end unnecessary tax credits*
- *Do not implement regressive taxation*
- *Do not implement education tax credits, school vouchers, or any other scheme that foregoes collections or siphons money away from legitimate public uses*

FULLY FUND A FIRST-RATE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT FOR EVERY STUDENT

- *Increase revenue without regressive taxation*
- *Increase the per-pupil base SEEK funding*
- *State support for preschool up to 200% of federal poverty*
- *Fully fund all-day kindergarten*
- *Fully fund school district transportation costs*
- *Increase per-pupil funding for FRYSCs, ESS tutoring, textbooks/technology*
- *Fully fund meaningful educator professional development*
- *Fully fund implementation of all state mandated school safety measures*

KEEP KENTUCKY'S COMMITMENT TO EDUCATORS

- *Maintain a defined benefit pension for all public employees*
- *Establish a minimum starting salary for teachers at \$40,000 per year*
- *Guarantee a living wage of at least \$15 per hour for all hourly school employees*
- *Fully fund the actuarially recommended annual contribution for all public employee pensions*
- *Reinstate and fully fund cost of living adjustments for KRS participants*
- *Fully fund state contributions to retiree health care for TRS annuitants*