

## Amending PA Public School Code - Section 515:

### **The People's Public Education Testimony Community Hearings**

#### Background Context:

On March 10, 1949 the Pennsylvania Public School Code Act was established. It became effective to be implemented and executed among school districts across the Commonwealth on July 1, 1949.

**Section 515 of the Public School Code** broadly delineates the **Rights and Powers Preserved** for governing bodies of school districts. It currently states: "In every school district the board of school directors shall continue to have and possess, all the powers, rights, and privileges, not inconsistent with this act, which boards of school directors, boards of school controllers, or boards of public education, in its respective district, lawfully had on the eighteenth day of May, one thousand nine hundred eleven".

**The Education Law Center** states: "School boards play a pivotal role in shaping the education that public school students receive. Setting budgets, adopting curriculum, and approving school policies, including disciplinary policies, are among their many responsibilities". However, "**Through elections, school boards are accountable to the residents of the district they serve**". This means **they have a responsibility to keep the community informed and to make their decisions using input from the public and members of the school community**".

**The Education Law Center has concisely bulleted three main powers of Pennsylvania School Board Directors/Board of Education:**

- 1) The power to hire or terminate a Superintendent
- 2) The power to adopt and change curriculum
- 3) The power to establish disciplinary policies

**The Pennsylvania School Board Association (PSBA), specifying the "Pledge to School Board Effectiveness" and "Principles for Governance and Leadership" is delineated as this:**

- 1) Lead responsibly
- 2) Act ethically
- 3) Plan thoughtfully
- 4) Evaluate continuously
- 5) Communicate clearly
- 6) Advocate earnestly
- 7) Govern effectively

#### The realities in our communities:

Parents, students, community leaders and advocates have been grappling with the detrimental impact of not having a viable, fair and balanced U.S. Department of Education - Office of Civil Rights. The Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission has two very narrow and specific statutes that do not cover the acute issues needed to fully protect the rights that should be bestowed on students and their families. Section 515 of the PA Public School Code does not delineate accountability measures for governing school boards. School community members have no immediate recourse or checks and balances when school boards vote on decisions not based on community consensus. This section of the PA school code needs to be amended to allow for timely and

effective school board governance in the 21st century. This section of the public school code needs to define the duty of community engagement by school board directors. The definition needs to be clear and measurable; if not adhered to, board members would face consequences upheld by the Pennsylvania Department of Education, not the Common Pleas Court. Hardworking Pennsylvanians don't have the means to pay for a lawyer to represent their interests in court. School board directors are elected public servants. They need to respect and represent that charge.

**The call for people power to take action:**

The people of Pennsylvania deserve an opportunity to publicly share their specific experiences and document their stories. On Sunday June 28th, The People's Public Education Testimony Community Hearings will launch in Norristown, Montgomery County. Citizens from the five Southeast counties of the Commonwealth will be able to congregate, coalesce and commune with others for the common good of every Pennsylvanian seeking real reform in our public school systems. Join us! Below is the hearing schedule. Email your interest to attend to: [carmina.a.taylor@gmail.com](mailto:carmina.a.taylor@gmail.com) and a formal registration form will be sent to you. This is the moment for all of us to collectively make a difference.

**Our ultimate desired outcome:**

All of the hearings will be recorded and collated. The final product, including the people's request to amend section 515, will be sent to the PA State House Education Chair.

Date	Location	Time	Event	Host/Co-Hosts	Notes
Sunday, June 28th	Norristown	5:00 p.m.	<a href="#">Amending PA Public School Code - Section 515:</a> The People's Public Education Testimony Community Hearings	<b>Lead Host: CCATE</b> Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus (PLBC) Pennsylvania Legislative Hispanic Caucus (PLHC) PHRC- Regional Director Amber Harris  <b>All PA Black Mayors in all five counties will be invited as co-hosts.</b>	Invite list to all elected officials and community stakeholders in Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery and Philadelphia Counties. All hearings are open to the public.
Sunday, July 19th	Williamsport	5:00 p.m.	<a href="#">Amending PA Public School Code -</a>	<b>Lead Host: Mayor of Williamsport, Derek Slaughter and Mayor Kendy Alavarez</b>	Invite list to all elected officials and community stakeholders in the region. All hearings are

			<p><b><u>Section 515:</u></b>  <b>The People's Public Education Testimony Community Hearings</b></p>	<p>Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus (PLBC)  Pennsylvania Legislative Hispanic Caucus (PLHC)  PHRC-  Regional Director Amber Harris</p>	<p>open to the public.</p>
<p>Sunday,  July 26th</p>	<p>Indiana</p>	<p>5:00  p.m.</p>	<p><b><u>Amending PA Public School Code - Section 515:</u></b>  <b>The People's Public Education Testimony Community Hearings</b></p>	<p><b><u>Lead Host: Mayor of Indiana, Charles Simelton</u></b>  Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus (PLBC)  Pennsylvania Legislative Hispanic Caucus (PLHC)  PHRC-  Regional Director Amber Harris</p> <p><b>PA Black Mayors from Johnstown, Sylvia King and Curwenville, Bear Stewart, will be invited as co-hosts</b></p>	<p>Invite list to all elected officials and community stakeholders primarily in Indiana, Cambria and Clearfield Counties. All hearings are open to the public.</p>
<p>Sunday,  August 23rd</p>	<p>Pittsburgh</p>	<p>5:00  p.m.</p>	<p><b><u>Amending PA Public School Code - Section 515:</u></b>  <b>The People's Public Education Testimony Community Hearings</b></p>	<p><b><u>Invited Lead Host: Pittsburgh NAACP, 412 Justice</u></b>  Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus (PLBC)  Pennsylvania Legislative Hispanic Caucus (PLHC)  PHRC-  Regional Director Amber Harris</p> <p><b>All PA Black Mayors from Allegheny, Beaver and Washington counties will be invited as co-hosts.</b></p>	<p>Invite list to all elected officials and community stakeholders in Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery and Philadelphia Counties. All hearings are open to the public.</p>

<p>Sunday, August 30th</p>	<p>Meadville</p>	<p>5:00 p.m.</p>	<p><u><a href="#">Amending PA Public School Code - Section 515:</a></u> The People's Public Education Testimony Community Hearings</p>	<p><u><a href="#">Lead Host: Mayor of Meadville, Jaime Kinder</a></u> Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus (PLBC) Pennsylvania Legislative Hispanic Caucus (PLHC) PHRC- Regional Director Amber Harris</p> <p><b>Mayor Doss of Farrell City will be invited as a co-host.</b></p>	
<p>Sunday, September 27th</p>	<p>Lancaster</p>	<p>5:00 p.m.</p>	<p><u><a href="#">Amending PA Public School Code - Section 515:</a></u> The People's Public Education Testimony Community Hearings</p>	<p><u><a href="#">Lead Host: Lancaster Democratic Caucus</a></u> Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus (PLBC) Pennsylvania Legislative Hispanic Caucus (PLHC) PHRC- Regional Director Amber Harris</p> <p><b>All PA Black/Hispanic Mayors from Berks, Dauphin and Lehigh will be invited as co-hosts.</b></p>	