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HCBOE 2013 Legislative Priorities

1. Funding

Of all the issues that impact education, **funding** is the most critical. To maintain the quality of education our stakeholders expect and deserve, cuts in state funding have to be absorbed by our reserves and overcome by reduced expenditures. Local funds are severely strained not only by state cuts, but also by increasing costs, placing an even greater burden on local taxpayers. For example, classified employees' benefits are paid entirely with local funds; since November 2010, healthcare premiums have skyrocketed and the Board's portion has increased 274 percent or \$3,402 per employee. An additional annual increase of \$1,800 announced effective July 1, 2013, adds to this burden and results in an increase of 366.41 percent or \$5,202 *per employee*. These continued state cuts further deplete reserves to precarious levels. The HCBOE requests that legislation that has additional fiscal impact on public education not be supported.

2. Support for Public Education, Not Tax-Funded Vouchers

The HCBOE is opposed to vouchers, tuition tax credits, or scholarships which would divert K-12 public funding to private schools or home study. Reallocating tax dollars into private schools would weaken - not improve - public education.

3. Local Control and Flexibility

Our Board supports the continuation of local control and flexibility versus allowing the state to control educational programs through targeted funding allocations and rules. Our Board opposes legislative initiatives which would limit the authority or revenue potential of local school systems under state constitutional provisions, such as local option sales taxes for capital improvements. School systems need local funds to fully implement student achievement initiatives to meet and surpass mandated accountability measures. Board members and superintendents need flexibility to meet the needs of the private sector by responding to community specific requests, targeting expenditures effectively and efficiently based on community needs rather than according to state rules and expenditure controls. Arbitrary rules on expenditures inhibit best practices in budgeting based on student achievement needs. We urge the Georgia General Assembly to resist attempts to pass statutes that limit the constitutional authority of school boards.

Support for these issues would be greatly appreciated. We understand our legislators face many challenges and have a difficult task as state leaders. By working together, we can achieve our common goal of making our public schools the best possible. Thank you for considering these concerns.