

Cincinnati Public Schools 5-Year Renewal Levy 2020

Proposed Resolution: *That the Cincinnati Association endorse a 5-year renewal for CPS general fund operating expenses supporting student achievement.*

Cincinnati Public Schools (CPS) has a levy on this November's ballot. It is a renewal of an emergency operating levy for 7.34 mills/\$48,000,000 for a period of five years. Voter approval of this issue will not increase taxes; the original levy was passed in 2016 with 62% of the vote. It will renew funding for two education priorities:

- Learning programs for 36,000 CPS K-12 students
 - o Continues college, vocational, and career-readiness programs
 - o Expands quality neighborhood school options
 - o Increases access to learning technology for all students
- High-quality preschool for nearly 5,000 3- & 4-year-old children
 - o Maintains \$15 million in annual funding for expanding affordable access to high quality preschool through CPS and Cincinnati Preschool Promise (CPP) community-based providers.

The Education Panel voted unanimously to endorse passage of this renewal fund.

Discussion

Arguments for Endorsement

- This is a renewal levy – taxpayers won't bear any additional burden.
- CPS needs these dollars to maintain excellent service. If this renewal levy does not pass, millions in dedicated preschool funding for thousands of 3- and 4-year-olds will be lost. CPS will be forced to reduce many academic and career-training programs, cut hundreds of teachers, increase class sizes, and scale back classroom technology and learning materials.
- Since 2016, CPS has achieved the following:
 - o Preschool
 - More students are in quality preschool than ever before because of the PSP funds. 1651 children are receiving tuition assistance in 132 preschool settings.
 - Approximately 131 area preschools have increased their quality rating.
 - CPS kindergarteners who attended high-quality preschools were more than twice as likely to be on track and ready to learn as students who did not. The lowest income and highest risks benefitted most.
 - The Preschool Promise helped preschools and their families weather the Covid emergency.
 - o General
 - CPS is increasingly becoming "a destination of choice." Overall enrollment of CPS increased 20% since 2012-13.
 - 98% of CPS third graders met Ohio's Third Grade Reading Guarantee in 2018-19.
 - 3rd Grade Literacy increase of 20 percentage points from 2015-16 to 2018-19.
 - 9th-grade Algebra I scores increased 26% from 2015-16 to 2018-19.
 - 526 CPS Juniors participated in Job Shadowing with 15 Area Companies in 2018-19.
 - CPS graduation rates have increased (6.7 percent gain from 2014 to 2018).
 - CPS completed an ambitious five-year strategic plan last year after lengthy consultation with the community and with explicit procedures to closely monitor progress on its goals and assure continuous improvement.

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Arguments against Endorsement

- People are under financial strain due to Covid, and this might be a bad time to maintain a tax.
- Property taxes have been going up for a variety of reasons, so voters might prefer some tax relief.
- Preschool teachers are not all making \$15/hour as promised (though wages are up) in large part because providers cannot afford to increase pay.
- The goal of 5,000 preschool students will not be met by the 5-year target.
- Not enough very low-income parents are receiving assistance to meet the goals.
- There are still some preschool “deserts” without high quality providers, especially in the lowest-income neighborhoods.
- There will be approximately \$10 million in unspent Preschool Promise funds.