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Board of Secondary & Elementary Education (BESE)

BESE is “composed of eleven members. One member shall be a resident of and shall be elected by the electors of each of the districts established by law for the election of members of the board. Three members shall be appointed by the governor from the state at large, with consent of the Senate.” LA R.S. §17:7.1(B).

Advocacy Procedures/Protocols during Meetings

- BESE Meetings occur over two days; Day one is for Committee Meetings; Day two is the Full Board Meeting.
- Public Comment is accepted on each agenda item.
- Public Comment cards are available at the meeting and should be filled out and submitted prior to the start of the Committee Meeting, but may be submitted up until a motion on the agenda item has been made.
- An individual, speaking on behalf of self, is permitted three (3) minutes to speak on a given agenda item.
- An organization is permitted five (5) minutes to speak on a given agenda item (a school system is considered one organization)
- An organization may bring more than one person to the comment table/microphone to speak on behalf of the organization during the five-minute time-allotment.

Advocacy Tips/Guidance during Meetings

- The best time for public comment is on Day one, during BESE Committee meetings.
- Showing unity at the comment table makes an impact.
- If bringing more than once person to the table, limit the number of speakers to one or two for efficiency.
- Have the person(s) most relevant to the topic matter (superintendents, board members, specialist, teachers, students, etc.) speak on the agenda item.
- It is important for effective advocacy to comment on measures that are supported and on measures that are opposed.
- At times, positions and rationales from individuals and organizations during public comment may seem repetitive; it is crucial to continue to comment on those positions and rationales to demonstrate strength in numbers.

Advocacy Avenues outside of Meetings

- If unable to advocate in-person at BESE, draft a letter/email to your BESE member and the three Governor appointees to BESE. (See Template/Example on page 2)
- In the correspondence, reference the agenda item(s) and support or opposition as well as a rationale or reason for the position (including data provides additional context).
- Send the letter/email after the BESE agenda is released but before the Committee Meeting Date.

Advocacy Assistance

- LSBA is available as a resource to assist any member-school system in preparing for advocacy (generally, drafting talking points, fielding questions, etc.).
- Staff can assist through email, phone, or virtual meetings. To contact LSBA regarding advocacy, email Janet Pope at jpope@lsba.com.

BESE Advocacy Letter/Email Template

Dear INSERT BESE MEMBER NAME,

I am/we are INSERT NAME(S) serving as INSERT POSITION(S) in the INSERT SCHOOL SYSTEM/ORGANIZATION.

In my/our role, I/we have been following the discussions and meetings on INSERT. I/we have also been working with INSERT in the community regarding this/these topic(s). I am/we are writing to express my/our support/opposition to agenda item(s): LIST ALL AGENDA ITEMS.

Below are comments on agenda items I/we support:

- Item x: (identify agenda item number and name).
INSERT RATIONALE/REASONS
- Item x: (identify agenda item number and name).
INSERT RATIONALE/REASONS

Below are comments on the agenda items I/we oppose:

- Item x: (identify agenda item number and name).
INSERT RATIONALE/REASONS
- Item x: (identify agenda item number and name).
INSERT RATIONALE/REASONS

Thank you for your time and consideration of these positions.

BESE Advocacy Letter/Email Example

Dear Mr. Smith,

I am Jane Doe and currently serve as the Technology Director in the Rain Coat School System. In my role, I have been following the discussions and meetings on Broadband internet access. I have also been working with local internet providers in the community regarding this topic. I am writing to express my support for agenda item A. 1.6.

Below are comments on the agenda item I support:

- **Item A.1.6: Broadband Access**

The Rain Coat School System is located in a rural area of the state where reliable internet access has always been an issue. When COVID struck, it was a major problem for our students. Nearly 20% of our students were unable to participate in virtual/online learning because of no access to or very limited internet services. As a result, many children fell behind in their learning and studies which was very evident when the 2020-2021 school year started. If there had been reliable and accessible broadband service, it would have made an already difficult situation much easier for all involved. I fully support the grant initiative to bring broadband access to our school district.

Thank you for your time and consideration of these positions.