



# SCHOOL EQUITY CAUCUS

*Making a difference for the public school children of Michigan*

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Dear Colleagues:

It has been a busy time in Lansing as the action ramps up during budget season! Here's the latest news:

## **1. Budget Positions Being Staked Out**

As of this writing, the budget proposals for the 2019-20 school year have been released by the governor and Senate, with the House version out perhaps as soon as this week. The two versions on the table differ in many respects, and all parties are dealing with split party control for the first time in nearly a decade. Therefore, a quick and easy resolution of the differences will most likely be more difficult than it has been in recent years.

Much of the school budget discussion will be impacted by what is decided with regard to roads and overall revenue. The governor has called for a significant increase in funding available to the state, and the structure of her budget hinges on having more money to work with. So far, the legislature has not shown a desire to initiate the kind of revenue increases the governor has proposed and they are preparing budgets within the scope of existing revenues. Something will have to give in this area; it will be impossible to have all of the program increases proposed by the governor without more revenue.

When it comes to roads, the governor has taken the stance that she will not sign a budget that does not include a "real" road funding plan. Republicans in the Senate have indicated that they will instead consider an additional road funding package this summer, keeping it separate from the current budget development process. In the Senate budget proposals put out last week, the transportation budget plan called for some additional spending, but was largely based on funds previously earmarked in the roads package passed a few years ago. The governor's spokesperson has said that Governor Whitmer will veto that budget plan if it comes to her desk.

So, the battle lines are being drawn, and the waters will become even muddier when the House throws its proposals into the mix. We will pass along a summary of the House K-12 budget proposal as soon as it becomes available.

A more detailed examination of the Senate's budget proposal was included in last week's Information Alert. Please be sure to refer to that document for additional information.

And as was discussed in that communication, districts should work toward preparing their 2019-20 budgets without expecting the state budget to be done by the end of June. A cautious and conservative approach toward 2019-20 district revenue projections will be best until a much clearer picture emerges of where the state budget will ultimately land.

## **2. May Consensus Revenue Conference Upcoming**

Another factor impacting the budget battle will be the rate of revenue collection under the state's existing tax structure. Twice each year representatives of the governor's budget office, the House Fiscal Agency, and the Senate Fiscal Agency gather to look at the current state of the economy and tax collections to this point in the fiscal year. The May Consensus Revenue Estimating Conference (CREC) will be held in mid-May and will provide the "final" revenue numbers upon which next year's budget will be based (at least given current revenue sources).

In time period since the previous CREC was held in January, reports are that actual revenues are running a bit behind the projections agreed upon at that time. We will obviously have a more definitive picture in a couple of weeks, but if this trend holds true, it is not great news.

As always, we will provide you with an update following the upcoming meeting.

## **3. A Tight Timeframe for Other Legislation**

We have been keeping close tabs on two sets of bills that need quick action if they are to be of help to districts this school year.

The educator evaluation bills (SB 122, pertaining to teachers, and SB 202, for administrators) passed the House this week and are headed back to the Senate for final consideration on Tuesday (April 30). They are expected to be signed immediately by the governor so that districts will still be able to meet (barely!) the May 1 deadline for evaluations of non-tenured teachers. The bills would postpone the implementation of the mandate to use student growth data as 40% of educator evaluations in the current year, keeping the level at 25%. The 40% mandate would go back into effect for next school year.

Legislation that addresses the exceptionally large number of snow days experienced across the state this winter faces a less certain future. HB 4206 (introduced by Rep. Frederick) passed the House a couple of weeks ago and is currently in the Senate Education and Career Readiness Committee. This bill would forgive snow days that coincide with days declared as an emergency, both this year and at any time in the future. It also provides for the option to make up any "unforgiven" days with added time in increments of at least 30 minutes. The proposal also requires hourly employees to be compensated for any forgiven time, unless a contract or other agreement already addresses such compensation.

Another bill addressing the issue, SB 113 (sponsored by Sen. Ananich) has moved out of that same committee to the full Senate floor but has yet to see action there, and even if passed, must still move through the entire House process before becoming law. SB 113 provides forgiveness for snow days that occurred in conjunction with Governor Whitmer's emergency declaration in late January/early February, and applies only to 2018-19.

At this time, it is unclear what the future holds for either of these snow day bills. Given the time frame, districts should assume that neither bill will make it through the legislature, and then adjust later if something changes.

#### **4. Other Legislation Being Monitored**

While the items discussed above are grabbing most of the attention at this point in the legislative calendar, other pieces of legislation remain in the queue. The following additional items have received attention in committee so far this term:

- HB 4162 (sponsored by Rep. Reilly) – This bill would eliminate the WorkKeys assessment as part of the Michigan Merit Exam. As noted in last month’s newsletter, the bill passed the House Education Committee relatively easily, but ran into trouble in the new Ways and Means Committee where it still remains.
- HB 4368 (Hornberger) and HB 4369 (Johnson) – HB 4369 removes the pre-Labor Day start restriction and also eliminates the ISD-wide common calendar requirement, thereby returning complete flexibility to schools in determining their start date. HB 4368 eliminates the requirement to hold a hearing with MDE in attendance prior to receiving a pre-Labor Day start. The bills received a hearing before the House Education Committee earlier this month.

The following bills addressing the Michigan Merit Curriculum (MMC) will be discussed in committee this week:

- HB 4269/4270 (Griffin) – These bills modify the current Visual/Performing/Applied Arts and foreign language requirements by requiring students to earn a total of three credits from any of the following “21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills” categories including:
  - Languages other than English (including sign language)
  - Visual/Performing/Applied Arts
  - Computer science or computer coding
  - A formal CTE programWhile the overall number of credits required remains the same, this change provides students with more flexibility.
- HB 4271 (Howell) – Under this bill, students could earn a credit in Statistics or Personal Finance as a replacement for Algebra II.
- HB 4282 (Hauck) – The required Health Education course would be able to be fulfilled by a thirty-hour OSHA training course for students enrolled in a CTE program.

Finally, there are two bills that have passed the Senate and are now being considered in the House Judiciary Committee (SB 106, sponsored by Sen. Outman, and SB 155, sponsored by Sen. Bullock) dealing with e-cigarettes and other nicotine delivery devices. These bills would tighten sales restrictions on these products, prohibit their sale to minors, and require child-resistant packaging. Further, SB 106 would prohibit minors from possessing vapor products or other alternative nicotine delivery devices.

Many other pieces of legislation impacting education have been introduced between the House and Senate already this term, but few have made much headway to date. As some of

the other more pressing issues are resolved (the budget, evaluation, and snow days), some of these other bills may receive more attention.

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That's all for this update! I hope you are enjoying our spring weather, and are looking forward to all of those end-of-year activities!

As always, please be in touch with questions or concerns.



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