



SCHOOL EQUITY CAUCUS

Making a difference for the public school children of Michigan

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Dear Colleagues,

Greetings from the School Equity desk, it's hard to believe we are already closing out February and nearing the beginning of spring. I hope you are enjoying a good month and finding time to catch your breath as the school year rolls on.

This month's items of interest include the Governor's State of the State address, the corresponding state of affairs in the new budgeting cycle, and the ongoing state of uncertainty in Washington. Let's dive in.

State of the State: Takeaways for Michigan Schools

Earlier this week, Governor Whitmer delivered her seventh State of the State address to a joint session of the House and Senate. In her speech, she outlined her vision for the upcoming year. Below are the key priorities she highlighted, in relation to Michigan's K-12 schools:

- **Education Priorities**
 - **Limiting Cell Phones in Classrooms:** The Governor emphasized the importance of minimizing distractions in schools by addressing the use of cell phones during instructional time. It is unclear if this will result in simple limitations or a more complete ban.
 - **Investing in Reading Strategies:** Increased funding will be directed toward evidence-based reading programs, along with enhanced metrics and transparency measures to help parents better understand school performance.
 - **Increasing Postsecondary Enrollment:** A focus on boosting the number of male high school graduates who pursue higher education or

skills training programs, ensuring students are prepared for future career opportunities.

- **Streamlining Licensing Systems:** The Governor proposed honoring trade licenses from other states, eliminating redundant exams, and simplifying reporting requirements to support career pathways for students and professionals alike.
- **Related Initiatives Impacting Schools and Communities**
 - **Expanding Affordable Child Care:** The administration plans to continue efforts to make child care more accessible and affordable, supporting families and early childhood development.
 - **Affordable Housing:** A \$2 billion investment aims to build, renovate, or purchase nearly 11,000 homes, increasing the supply of affordable housing and creating construction jobs that could benefit local families and economies.
 - **Health and Wellness:** Efforts to reduce medical debt and tax vapes similarly to cigarettes could have indirect benefits for student well-being and family stability.
 - **Roads:** The state's poor roads take an obvious toll on buses and other forms of transportation, but the bigger issue at stake is how roads will be funded, and how any shifts in funding might impact the SAF.

School Budget

Work has begun to sort through the Governor's Executive Budget Proposal and issue alternate proposals in the House and Senate. There's a long way to go in the process, but a lot of early attention is being given to the new SMART Plan in Sections 16-16e. Here are a few components we are keeping an eye on:

- Would designate "targeted support" to struggling schools use a scoring system virtually identical to the one found in Sec 22f from 2012-2013.
- Uses a combination of at-risk and new money to fund the implementation of "best practice" support strategies listed in the MiStrategyBank.
- Funds would be distributed to the lowest performing buildings within a district, even if that building hasn't received at-risk funding in the past (an elementary, for example), meaning that currently funded buildings could see their allocations reduced or terminated.

- Ties in weighted at-risk funds from Sec 31a and requires that all districts adopt best practices in Sec 16 to qualify for Sec 31a funding.

To provide some additional context and background, especially for our newer superintendents, you'll find a number of state funding attachments in this mailing, including the following:

- School Aid Fund (SAF) Expenditures Formerly from General Fund (GF)
- Historical SAF Revenues from the Michigan Lottery
- Michigan Pupil Decline Data

The Fed Factor

All eyes are on Washington as the new administration continues to roll out cuts and policy changes. While Tariffs are getting most of the headlines, the school community waits to see what will happen with the Department of Education.

Attached to this mailing is also a list of Federal Funding categories for FY 2024-25. Title I and School Lunch funding are the most notable, but you can see that many other important funds hang in the balance as well.

In a lobby meeting with representatives from the Governor's office last week, it was confirmed that there is no current plan to replace funds in-state if federal funding goes away. We will continue to monitor this and advocate accordingly.

House-Keeping

1. Our Region Tour continues with presentations at Regions 1 and 6 this coming week. We appreciate the warm reception and feedback we've received during our visits so far. If you'd like to schedule an update for a county meeting or other event, don't hesitate to reach out.
2. We are still hoping to offer a "Small but Mighty" drive-in event to be held this summer at a Northern Michigan location. Stay tuned for more details.
3. A new and improved School Equity logo is in the works and should be available for a sneak preview by next month!

That's all for this month's Newsletter. If there is a specific topic related to school equity that you would like to see addressed as a special feature in a future Newsletter, stand-alone mailing, podcast, or Town Hall Zoom, please let me know. We are here to serve!

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. Keim', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Brian Keim
Executive Director

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