



# SCHOOL EQUITY CAUCUS

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

121 W Allegan • Lansing, Michigan 48933  
www.schoolequitycaucus.org  
schoolequitycaucus@gmail.com  
269-806-6159

September 28, 2018

Dear Colleagues:

Greetings! I hope your school year is off to a great start! Here are some key items for your information as we move into fall:

## 1. General Meeting Held

The School Equity Caucus Fall General Membership meeting was held last week in Traverse City during the MASA Conference. Approximately 100 Caucus members and guests were in attendance and heard the most up-to-date school legislative information from our lobbyists Emily Laidlaw and Matt Kurta. Additionally, the 2018-19 School Equity Caucus goals were reviewed, and participants heard an update from the School Finance Research Collaborative project.

A big “thank you” goes to the MASA conference planning staff who assisted with arrangements (including a move back indoors from “the tent!”), and we also very much appreciate the participation of our business associates, American Fidelity Education Services, Hutchison, Shockey, Erley & Co, and Kapnick Insurance.

## 2. 2018-19 Caucus Goals

Each summer the School Equity Caucus Board of Directors gathers to review the work done by the Caucus in the previous year and to develop organizational goals for the year to come. Attached to this newsletter are the goals for 2018-19 as adopted by the Board. Please take a few moments to review this document, and feel free to send along any comments or questions.

## 3. Election News

Since our last update, the ballot for November’s election has been finalized. In the end, three ballot proposals have made it to the voters: the “Voters, not Politicians” proposal (that would change how redistricting is done in Michigan), the proposal to legalize recreational marijuana, and the proposal to ease restrictions on the voting process (“Promote the Vote”).

Two other proposals – those seeking to gradually increase the minimum wage to \$12/hour and to require employers to provide paid sick leave – were enacted by the legislature earlier this month and therefore will not go to voters. (The proposal ending prevailing wage requirements had already been enacted by the legislature in early June.) By taking this “preemptive” action, lawmakers maintained their ability to amend them later with a simple majority vote. If they had been left to the voters to decide, the legislature would have then needed a two-thirds majority to change any provisions.

When it comes to elected offices, the most recent polling suggests that the gubernatorial race may be tightening, with Democratic candidates remaining in front of their Republican opponents in all statewide races (attorney general, secretary of state, etc.). Close attention is also being paid to legislative races across the state with control of both the Michigan House and Senate potentially at stake. With the election still several weeks away, it is too early to tell if Democrats have a legitimate chance to win a majority in either house.

However the election turns out, we continue to prepare for a “lame duck” period that could be one of the most active in memory. If the Republican Party loses its hold on key offices in Lansing, there will most likely be a last-minute effort to push through unfinished items on their agenda. Many of these could have dire consequences for public education in Michigan.

No matter how the election turns out, we are guaranteed to have an extremely large turnover in legislators (due to Michigan’s strictest-in-the-nation term limits law) making it vitally important for the school community to establish connections with the many new individuals who will be coming to Lansing. These new senators and representatives will have much to learn in a short period about many complex education issues. We will need your help in reaching out to them to make connections and educate! Watch for more information to come on how you can assist in bringing these new lawmakers up-to-speed.

#### **4. Legislation Watch**

With the election drawing so much attention, things have been continued to be relatively quiet in the legislature over the last month. While some proposals could potentially move in the next few weeks, most activity will probably be delayed until after the election on November 6.

Here are some of the items we continue to watch:

- HB 5907 (sponsored by Rep. Frederick) was originally cast as a bill addressing technical fixes on language as well as notifications regarding college-level (AP/IB) courses and college-level credit exams (CLEP, etc.). However, the bill was amended to include a provision that sought to address a pupil accounting manual change that required cyber schools to ensure 1098 hours of instruction even if a student began “attending” the cyber school mid-year.

Unfortunately, the language used to fix this change replaced a requirement to “ensure” 1098 hours of instruction to one using the word “provide”. There are concerns that this change would lessen the quality of education provided by

cyber delivery methods vis à vis traditional schools. Negotiations are in progress to develop alternative language to address the concern stemming from the pupil accounting manual while ensuring cyber schools are held to the same standards of educational quality as traditional schools.

- The House Education Reform Committee has begun consideration of HB 5707 (sponsored by Rep. Miller). This bill would amend current legislation on teacher evaluation, and keep the percentage of evaluations based on student growth and assessment at the current 25%. The latest version also includes a provision that would allow districts to choose not to evaluate teachers for three years after they receive a rating of highly effective.

This particular bill would impact teachers only; a similar piece of legislation would be required to apply to administrators (since their evaluation is addressed in a different section of the School Code). The Caucus is in full support of this legislation to reduce the evaluation burden on administrators and to prevent the currently-mandated increase on growth factors from going to 40%.

- The 2019 state supplemental budget is expected to be moved after the election. Much like a school district's budget amendments through the year, this budget will flesh out and modify the budget adopted by the legislature in June. Of particular note in the supplemental process will be resolution to the specific means of allocating mental health funding designated for school safety (as potentially implemented via HB 5966 and SB 1031). Also under discussion are special education and CTE millage equalization funding as well as early literacy language.

Additionally, attention is being focused on current budget language that prevents districts from receiving foundation allowance in cases where those students also pay tuition. A bill to delay implementation of this provision for one year (SB 1098, sponsored by Sen. Jones) was brought before the Senate Education Committee this week and is expected to be moved to the full Senate for consideration.

- HB 4421 (sponsored by Rep. Hughes) would allow for flexibility in hiring substitutes for CTE programs to include those individuals without teaching certificates, but who possess an active or recently-lapsed license in a relevant field to be employed as a substitute. The bill has previously passed the House and received a hearing in the Senate Education Committee this week.
- HB 6314/6315 (sponsored by Rep. Kelly) would provide for the creation of "public innovative districts" that would be allowed to bypass many of the state's rules and regulations in the name of innovation. This legislation received a hearing earlier this month, but the implications of many provisions remain unclear. At present the bills do not appear to have the necessary votes to move; however, they could receive attention in lame duck.
- Other bills that may potentially see action include:
  - A letter grade accountability proposal
  - Pre-Labor Day start authorization
  - Teacher preparation and alternative certification options

It would appear action on these bills, if it comes, would not be before lame duck.

## 5. **Spreading the Word**

As discussed at our Traverse City meeting, we will be most effective when all Caucus members continue to add their voices in the fight for equity and spread the circle outward. We must continue to educate as much as we can about the inequities built into the current system. During various presentations I have done around the state, I have been reminded that even many within education do not have a full understanding of the funding structures that impact our work in the classroom. Presentations at county school board association meetings have proven to be very impactful with much excellent dialogue generated.

I'm looking forward to upcoming opportunities to present information on the Caucus and on school funding. If you would like your group to get on the schedule, please let me know!

-----

That's all for this month! As always, please be in touch with questions or concerns.



Dirk Weeldreyer  
Executive Director  
(269) 806-6159  
[schoolequitycaucus@gmail.com](mailto:schoolequitycaucus@gmail.com)