



SCHOOL EQUITY CAUCUS

Making a difference for the public school children of Michigan

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December 23, 2024

Dear Colleagues,

Holiday greetings to you from School Equity! I hope this holiday edition of our Newsletter finds you doing well and settling in for a time of rest and reflection as we close out 2024 and usher in the New Year.

A month ago it appeared we may need extra paper to report on all the legislation that was being positioned for the Lame Duck session, with the rare governmental trifecta in place to push things through. In reality, of the hundreds of bills that were introduced in one chamber or the other, the vast majority of them fizzled out like spent fireworks and left a frustrated legislature with very little to show for their time on task. That's not necessarily a bad thing, as sometimes less is more, especially when it comes to midyear changes for educators.

Let's take a closer look at a few items that did make it through the political gauntlet and are now awaiting Governor Whitmer's signature.

The Bills:

- **HB 6058 Employee Healthcare** – Perhaps the most impactful and consequential of the education issues before the legislature, this bill lifts the “hard cap” on school employee policies by 7% in 2025 and the greater of 3% or the rate of inflation in future years. While better insurance is a good thing for current employees and future educator recruitment, the sudden cost increase for districts will be an extremely heavy lift in a year where budgets were already set, and following a budget that provided no base foundation increase. School Equity and other education lobbyists pushed hard for a supplemental budget to help offset this increase in cost, but that did not happen. We will continue to advocate for increased funding to cover these expenses going forward.

- ***HB 5231-5234 Charter School Transparency*** – This is a very watered-down version of the original, more comprehensive package that would have placed heavy requirements and restrictions on public school academies (PSA's). The gist of the final package is that charter schools must list their education management organization (EMO) on all property signage, promo material, website, and student applications.
- ***HB 5450-5451 Firearm Storage*** – Requires DHHS to develop, and local ISD's to distribute, guidance on the safe storage of firearms to parents of all public and nonpublic school students in the state.
- ***HB 5594 Work Permits*** – Modifies the procedures for issuing work permits to minors, modifies (decreases) the hours during which minors under 16 can be required to work, and requires the creation of a state registry for employment of minors.

Of the myriad bills that did not make it across the finish line, some of the most notable included pension reform, mandatory kindergarten, modifications to the Michigan Merit Curriculum, dark store tax, Labor Day start, CTE millage sharing, and FAFSA completion for graduation.

Looking Ahead to 2025:

- ***The Legislature*** – Republicans will retake the majority in the House, 58-52, while Democrats will retain a slim margin in the Senate. There is speculation on the issues each party will champion, but how that plays out legislatively remains to be seen. Conventional wisdom suggests that a divided legislature will be challenged to find agreement on anything of great substance. As always, we will keep you in the know as the new political picture begins to take shape.
- ***Consensus Revenue Estimating Conference (CREC)*** – The annual CREC event will take place on Friday, January 10, and will give initial financial projections for the remainder of the 2024-25, as well as the next two fiscal cycles, 2026 and 2027. We will provide an analysis for our members following the conference.
- ***School Equity Region Tour*** – We've had the privilege of bringing School Equity presentations to about half of the Regions across the state and our tour will continue into the new year. These visits have been used to share the work of the Caucus and to add value through real-time legislative updates with our lead lobbyist, Matt Kurta, of Karoub Associates. If you would like to schedule us for other events, please contact me at your convenience to discuss dates and topics. We are happy to work with you to meet your needs and time constraints.

- **“Small-but-Mighty” Drive-In Event** – In response to our 2024 Member Survey results, we are in the process of planning a one-day event geared to the needs of our small and rural districts. This will likely take place in the northern part of the state, with specific date and location TBD. Stay tuned for more details.
- **School Equity Luncheon at MASA Midwinter** – It’s time for another School Equity General Meeting and Luncheon, and we will again be partnering with MASA to bring this event to you on the opening day of the Midwinter Conference at the Amway Grand in Grand Rapids. Look for all the details and an RSVP in a separate email. We’d love to see you all there!

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!

The School Equity team wishes you a wonderful holiday season and a productive start to the new year.

Best regards,



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