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Fwd: Capitol Watch: Sign Witness Slip in Opposition of Forced School Consolidation

1 message

Jason Bauer <jbauer@panaschools.com>
To: Bridgett Heinrich <bheinrich@panaschools.com>

Mon, Mar 22, 2021 at 1:52 PM

April Board Meeting

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **IASA** <iasa@iasaedu.org>
Date: Mon, Mar 22, 2021 at 1:50 PM
Subject: Capitol Watch: Sign Witness Slip in Opposition of Forced School Consolidation
To: <jbauer@panaschools.com>



**Make Our Voices Heard: Sign Witness Slip
in Opposition of Forced School Consolidation**

Outreach and advocacy efforts by school administrators played a key role last week in the sponsor of a proposal that would push to consolidate a minimum of 25 percent of Illinois school districts not calling House Bill 7 for a vote.

It's important we continue to make our voices heard on this important issue because Rep. Rita Mayfield (D-Waukegan) has said she is committed to calling HB 7 at the House Elementary and Secondary Education: Administration, Licensing & Charter School Committee at **2 p.m. on Wednesday, March 24**. We encourage you to [sign a witness slip in opposition](#) of this bill.

To recap, the proposal seeks to create a 20-person task force that will make recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly on the number of school districts in the state, the optimal amount of enrollment for a school district and where reorganization and realignment of school districts would be beneficial. The goal of the initiative is to reduce the statewide total number of school districts by no less than 25% through the reorganization of school districts into unit districts.

Eleven of the 20 members of the task force would have to approve the recommendations for it to proceed and be put to local voters at the ballot for a referendum.

IASA is not opposed to districts consolidating, but we believe strongly it has to be a community-initiated plan that is supported by incentives offered by the state. Otherwise, any proposal will lead to a significant increase in costs at the local level. The primary driver of that is the merging of salary schedules but increased transportation costs and additional facility needs can also arise.

[HB 7](#) is just one of the many proposals that could impact public education working its way through the committee process, which is all being conducted virtually this year. The deadline for bills to pass out of committee in the House remains Friday, March 26. The Senate has extended its deadline until Friday, April 16.

As we have done previously in Capitol Watch, I want to highlight legislation that members can sign witness slips in support or in opposition.

But first, I want to share a [document](#) some of you may have seen on ESSER III funding. The document has a table with estimates for how much money school districts will receive in the latest federal stimulus package. The Illinois State Board of Education is in the process of tabulating exact figures for Illinois schools.

COVID Relief for TRS Employees, Rep. Dave Severin (R-Benton)

HB 2997 [Sign Witness Slip](#) in support

HB 2998 [Sign Witness Slip](#) in support

These two proposals, which seek to provide teachers a pathway to accumulate additional service credit for working during the pandemic, will be called in the House Personnel and Pensions Committee on **Friday, March 26 at 9 a.m.**

Interest in the two bills has exploded, with more than 2,000 witness slips signed in support of HB 2997 and more than 6,000 witness slips in support of HB 2998. We encourage you to sign witness slips in support, if you haven't already.

[HB 2997](#) would require teachers to pay into TRS to earn the additional service credit for time worked between March 16, 2020 and June 30, 2021. The benefit would be limited to teachers who taught in person, under the current proposal. The legislation sets out specifications to waive the reduction in retirement annuity for Tier 1 and Tier 2 members.

[HB 2998](#) is more straightforward in that it says service credits shall be granted without any additional employee or employer contribution. The proposal says teachers who worked during the COVID-19 pandemic shall receive one additional day of service credit for each day of service credit worked during that period, notwithstanding any limitation on the amount of service credit that may be earned in a single year.

National School Lunch Program; Rep. Jehan Gordon-Booth (D-Peoria)

HB 1782, [Sign Witness Slip](#) in support

HB 1782 is an initiative backed by the Illinois Association of School Business Officials to improve food service in schools. The bill could be called **Wednesday, March 24 at 2 p.m.** during the House Elementary and Secondary Education: Administration, Licensing & Charter School Committee.

[HB 1782](#) makes it easier for districts to offer high quality meals to students by eliminating the low-bid requirement of selecting food service vendors.

Illinois is currently one of two states in the U.S. that requires National School Lunch Programs to be low bid. The current approach creates barriers for districts wanting to offer more fresh fruit and vegetables in schools, as well as farm-to-table options.

HB 1782 would permit districts to grade potential food service vendors with a matrix to better evaluate contractors and allow meaningful participation of students and staff in the evaluation process.

[Here's a fact sheet](#) with more details about HB 1782.

3/22/2021

Pana Community Unit School District #8 Mail - Fwd: Capitol Watch: Sign Witness Slip in Opposition of Forced School Consolidation

Thank you for your support and making your voices heard on matters that directly impact public education. We will continue to update you on critical legislation in Capitol Watch.

Sincerely,

Diane Hendren
Director of Governmental Relations
Illinois Association of School Administrators

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