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Fwd: Capitol Watch: Spring Session Ends After Midnight

1 message

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

Sun, May 28, 2023 at 8:09 AM

June 26 Board Meeting

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

From: **IASA** <iasa@iasaedu.org>
Date: Sat, May 27, 2023 at 12:00 PM
Subject: Capitol Watch: Spring Session Ends After Midnight
To: <jbauer@panaschools.com>



Legislators Wrap-Up Spring Session One Week After Scheduled Deadline

One week past the scheduled adjournment date, the General Assembly has wrapped up the Spring 2023 session with a budget that once again is positive for K12 schools, and also includes a historic investment in Early Childhood Education for the state's youngest learners.

The budget bill ([SB0250](#)), which was filed on Wednesday evening, allocated an additional \$350 million for Evidence-Based Funding — \$300 million of which will flow into the formula via tier money, with \$50 million being allocated for another round of Property Tax Relief Grants. The FY24 increase in EBF funding marks an impressive \$2.1 billion added to public education funding since the passage of the formula in 2017.

The budget also includes an additional \$250 million for the Smart Start IL program, matching Gov. JB Pritzker's request for a significant increase to early childhood programming. Of this funding amount, \$75 million will be added to the Early Childhood Block Grant program with the goal of increasing services to an additional 5,000 students across the state. The Governor's request for an allocation towards construction for early childhood centers also made it into the final budget with a \$50 million appropriation.

The Teacher Vacancy Grant Pilot Program, another program recommended by Gov. Pritzker, was also funded to the tune of \$45 million. This allocation represents funding at 50% of the Governor's \$70 million recommended funding amount. The original proposal aimed at providing a grant for the 170 school districts that have been identified as having the highest vacancy rates through the Unfilled Positions Survey. We anticipate that school districts will receive additional information from ISBE on how the final grant process and allocation will look.

Additionally, there was an \$86.4 million dollar increase to Mandated Categoricals (MCATS). This final number matches Gov. Pritzker's budget recommendation, and will result in \$32 million less funding for transportation than was recommended by ISBE. So while there is an increase to the funding level of these programs over the FY23 funding level, the final allocation does not meet the recommended threshold put forward by the State Board. We expect proration rates to be similar to what school districts have seen in recent years.

With a focus on school safety prominent on the minds of legislators this session, funding for "Critical Response Mapping" for schools was also included in this year's budget. The initiative was allocated \$16 million with the goal of funding the costs of this mapping process for all IL schools. Corresponding language can be found in [HB3817](#) (the budget implementation bill, or BIMP) that indicates participation in the mapping process is voluntary for schools, and that the funding for these maps will be available via a grant process. Participation would ensure that officers from any agency responding to an emergency would have instant access to accurate school blueprints for the law enforcement response to be as efficient and safe as possible.

Also added into the BIMP bill was language supported by IASA/IASBO that raises the competitive bid threshold for school districts from \$25,000 to \$35,000. The increase reflects the inflationary change since 2008, which was the last time the threshold was raised.

Highlights of Education Budget Increases Over FY23 Funding Levels

- \$350 million Evidence-Based Funding
- \$86.4 million Mandated Categorical Programs
- \$75 million Early Childhood Block Grant
- \$13.7 million Alternative ED/Regional Safe Schools
- \$5.0 million After School Programs
- \$4.6 million Career Technical Education
- \$3.0 million Computer Science Equity Program
- \$1.3 million Agency Capacity
- \$1.2 million Philip J. Rock Center and School

A one-pager detailing other budget highlights can be found [here](#).

Other Important Bills that Passed Since Last Friday

Racism-Free Schools Act

[SB0090](#) (Murphy; D-Des Plaines), named the Racism-Free Schools Act by the advocacy organization TeachPlus, also made a final push late in the spring session. This bill was heavily negotiated by management groups, the Illinois State Board of Education, the Attorney General's Office, and the Illinois Department of Human Rights. Although all groups contended that harassment based on race is already illegal and there are multiple board policies that speak to the prohibition of this behavior, as well as provide pathways for remedy, TeachPlus was adamant that legislation be passed to address what they believe to be an epidemic of race-based harassment in K-12 schools. The final bill allowed all groups to be neutral following significant changes from the introduced bill. The main tenets of the final bill include additional reporting requirements for incidents of harassment on the basis of race, additional training for school staff on race-based harassment, and the inclusion of a new board policy on racial harassment that will mirror existing policy on the prohibition of sexual harassment.

Halal/Kosher School Meals

[HB3643](#) (Rashid; D-Berwyn), which was also [SB0167](#) (Villivalam; D-Chicago), passed both chambers in the final days of session. The bill requires ISBE to enter into a master contract with vendors that can supply meals that accommodate religious dietary

requirements, such as Halal and Kosher. Upon request from a student, school districts would purchase the requested meals from the vendor secured through the State Board's master contract. The meals available through the contract must be prepackaged to ensure the district would not be required to engage in any specific preparations for the meals other than to warm them. The meals must also meet USDA nutritional guidelines to ensure schools are able to receive federal reimbursement for the meals, and school districts may not be charged more than the price for a federally reimbursable meal. The program is also subject to appropriation, and the General Assembly did not provide for an appropriation for this program in the FY24 budget, so school districts will not be required to offer meals under this provision for the 24-25 school year. We anticipate advocacy efforts from the proponents to secure funding in future budgets, and if they are successful, we believe the final bill language provides protections from the additional burdens and costs associated with the requirements of the original bill. The full text of the final enrolled bill can be found [here](#).

Full Day Kindergarten Mandate

[HB2396](#) (Canty; D-Arlington Heights), which was aggressively pushed by the advocacy organization Advance Illinois, mandates the offering of full-day kindergarten in all Illinois school districts by 2027-2028 and has been approved by the General Assembly. The original bill would have required implementation by July 1, 2023. The final bill requires ISBE to develop a task force to conduct a study of existing kindergarten programs to determine how many districts are currently unable to offer a full-day program, in addition to collecting information on the potential capital needs that may be required to make this a reality in some districts. Following the study, districts will be expected to implement full-day kindergarten by the 2027-2028 school year, with some districts being given two additional years dependent on certain criteria.

Children's Adversity Index Project

Another bill driven by Advance Illinois was also passed by the General Assembly. [HB0342](#) (Ammons; D-Urbana) directs ISBE to develop a "Children's Adversity Index" that is intended to measure the level of exposure to trauma of students in a district or community. The effort will include multiple state agencies and the target date for development of the index is May 31, 2025. Additionally, the bill provides statutory definitions of "trauma," "trauma-responsive learning environments," and "whole child," will require the number of school counselors, school psychologists, school social workers, and school nurses to be reported on the school report card, and directs ISBE to create a committee that will make recommendations to change the professional educator licensure requirements and licensure renewal requirements to include proficiency in trauma, adverse childhood experiences, restorative practices, and other related proficiencies. This committee will provide these recommendations by October 1, 2024. The bill also reestablishes the Whole Child Task Force.

Session Wrap-Up

All in all, there were around 80 bills that impacted education in some way that were passed through both chambers and will be sent to the Governor's Office in the coming weeks. The full list of bills that have passed can be reviewed through the bill tracker tool that is available on the IASA/IASBO websites. We will continue to update the tracker over the next two months as bills are signed into law.

We want to thank everyone who filed witness slips, filled out One Click Politics campaigns, and called their legislators when important pieces of legislation came up throughout this session. Your voices are - and will continue to be - critical when bills that impact public education are considered by the General Assembly.

Thank you for your advocacy and we hope you all have a fantastic summer!

Sincerely,

Madeline McCune
Director of Governmental Relations
Illinois Association of School Administrators/Illinois Association of School Business
Officials

Emily Warnecke
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