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Fwd: Capitol Watch: Legislative Updates & Upcoming Spring Break

1 message

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April Board meeting

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

From: **IASA** <iasa@iasaedu.org>
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Subject: Capitol Watch: Legislative Updates & Upcoming Spring Break
To: <jbauer@panaschools.com>



Education Legislation Updates & Spring Break Ahead!

Happy Friday!

As the dust settled from the primary election frenzy on Tuesday, the General Assembly reconvened in Springfield on Wednesday afternoon to resume the committee process for a variety of bill proposals. Today's Capitol Watch provides updates on the week's legislative developments that impact education, including bills addressing school curriculum, policies, and crucial funding matters. See below for a recap of another exciting week in the capital city.

General Primary Election Recap

Tuesday's General Primary Election shed light on intriguing insights into party politics. Over 20 primary races took place in the House, and amidst the aftermath, only one incumbent faced defeat. Representative Mary Flowers (D-Chicago), a veteran of the House since 1985, lost her seat. Similarly, among the five primary races in the Senate, only one member, Senator Natalie Toro (D-Chicago), appointed to the 20th District seat in 2023, was unsuccessful in retaining her position.

Teacher Shortage Working Group

House Speaker Emanuel "Chris" Welch has established the Teacher Shortage Working Group to tackle the issue of teacher vacancies in Illinois schools. The group, led by Rep. Katie Stuart (D-Collinsville), aims to address recruitment, retention, and diversification of qualified educators. Speaker Welch emphasized the importance of attracting passionate educators to shape children's futures and appointed Rep. Stuart for her collaborative

approach and background in education. Rep. Stuart expressed gratitude for the initiative and highlighted the significance of quality education for all students. The working group comprises several legislators, including Rep. Harry Benton, Rep. Sharon Chung, Rep. Fred Crespo, Rep. Will Davis, Rep. Laura Faver Dias, Rep. Michelle Mussman, Rep. Aaron Ortiz, and Rep. Sue Scherer. The group aims to build on existing initiatives and bridge gaps in the educator pipeline to meet the demand in schools.

Senate Appropriations - Education Committee

The Senate Appropriations committee for Education heard from stakeholders on several proposals that would require funding from the General Assembly for certain programs to get off the ground.

SB 3247 (Ellman-D; Naperville) is the appropriations bill that was filed to accompany the creation of the Healthy School Meals for All Program from last spring. Although the bill that established the program was signed into law, an appropriation was not made from the General Assembly in the FY24 budget. During the hearing, the proponents indicated that the anticipated full funding amount for the program would be \$209,000,000 for FY25.

SB 2222 (Fine-D; Glenview) was brought forward to bring to light a discussion about providing funding for paid internships for school social worker candidates. The bill is a companion to **HB 3798** (Stava Murray-D; Downers Grove), which passed the House last spring, and was amended in the Senate to create a competitive grant program for paid internships.

Senate Education Committee

SB 3606 (Loughran Cappel-D; Crest Hill) was called forward for a formal hearing following weeks of negotiations and discussions between proponents and opponents. The measure aims to create equity for tuition reimbursement for special education students who attend separate public schools, in a similar way to the existing reimbursement model for special education students who attend private special education schools. The bill is the result of discussions from the High-Cost Special Education Funding Commission, which has studied this issue since 2021, and from ongoing concerns about the inequity of the state's current reimbursement model. Although a highly contentious issue (witness slips at the time of the hearing totaled 654 proponents and 940 opponents), the bill received a favorable vote and was passed to the Senate floor.

SB 3553 (Lightford-D; Hillside) was amended to provide that students who achieve a "meets" level of proficiency on state assessments are not to be automatically enrolled in the next most rigorous level of coursework. Instead, the bill requires that a school district's acceleration policy shall provide students with the option to enroll in the next most rigorous level of coursework. The bill also allows for school districts to waive certain course requirements if a student is accelerated past certain courses via the policy, if the student is able to demonstrate mastery. The amended bill was placed on an agreed bill list and passed out of committee with unanimous support from the committee members.

House K12 Education: School Curriculum & Policies Committee

HB 4219 (Yang Rohr-D; Naperville) extends the requirement to provide instruction on the dangers of fentanyl to students in grades 6 through 8. The bill is a trailer to **PA 103-0365**, which required very specific instruction in the dangers of fentanyl for students in grades 9 through 12. Multiple groups expressed concern with the prescriptive nature of this instruction for middle school students, and the bill's sponsor indicated that she would be creating an amendment that would simply add fentanyl instruction to the existing requirements in the health code for instruction on drugs and alcohol for students in grades 6 through 8. The bill received a unanimous vote from the committee, and will be brought back with an amendment for further discussion.

HB 5250 (Ammons-D; Urbana) is an identical measure to SB 3553 described above. The bill received a unanimous vote and was passed to the House floor.

HB 5184 (Davidsmeyer-R; Jacksonville) requires that a school district's "policy on bullying" be age and developmentally appropriate, and defines that "age and developmentally appropriate" means being suitable to a particular age or age group of children and adolescents, based on the developing cognitive, emotional, and behavioral capacity typical for the age or age group. The legislation would take effect July 1, 2024. The bill received a unanimous vote and was sent to the House floor.

HB 5434 (Davis-R; Yorkville) aims to address situations where a student leaves a district and the district of origin is unable to verify the location of the student's new school. Specifically, the bill would not allow a district to unenroll a student until the new school district has been verified, but would require ISBE to create a new "code" in the Student Information System to account for these students so they are not counted against a school district's attendance rates on the school report card. Concerns have been expressed by ISBE, as well as management groups, and the Representative indicated he plans to bring the bill back to committee with an amendment.

HR 599 (Lilly-D; Oak Park) is a non-binding resolution that would encourage the Illinois High School Association (IHSA) to eliminate restrictions on student-athlete transfers. As a resolution, it would have no effect of law, should it be passed, but it certainly demonstrates that the General Assembly has concerns about current transfer limitations. The resolution was passed unanimously by the committee.

HB 4896 (Mussman-D; Schaumburg) is a trailer bill to PA 102-0702, which created the employment verification process for any new school employees. The trailer bill aims to enhance guidelines for reporting staff-student boundary violations within schools and to external agencies, and mandates that the employee code of professional guidelines includes comprehensive reporting methods. Additionally, the legislation modifies the applicant template provided by ISBE, specifying the inclusion of current employer information only if the applicant directly interacts with students. For substitute employees licensed by ISBE seeking employment across multiple school districts, their employment history review shall be conducted by the ROE or intermediate service center serving those districts before initial hiring or placement on the approved substitute list. This review would remain valid as long as the substitute works for a district within the ROE or service center's jurisdiction or remains on their approved list. The bill received a unanimous vote from the committee, but will be brought back with an amendment for further discussion.

HB 4895 (Yang Rohr-D; Naperville) requires instruction on climate change for students in grades 9 through 12, although these principles are already required in the Next Generation Science Standards adopted by ISBE. Following conversations with stakeholders, the Representative recognized this topic is already covered in the required learning standards, and plans to amend the bill to direct ISBE to develop instructional materials for use in teaching these standards. The bill will be subject to appropriation once amended, meaning that ISBE will not be required to create the materials unless the General Assembly provides the funding to cover the cost of this work. The bill received a partisan vote, and will be brought back to committee for further discussion on the amendment.

House K12 Education: Administration, Licensing, & Charter Schools Committee

HB 4672 (Mussman-D; Schaumburg) seeks to provide clarity to the required number of licensure tests that are required for speech-language pathologists to achieve licensure in Illinois. The bill received unanimous approval, and the sponsor indicated that additional conversations will be taking place to determine the specific nature of the clarification needed in statute, and that the bill will return to committee with an amendment.

HB 1745 (Hammond-R; Macomb) seeks to allow for an educator candidate to receive a provisional license for a two year time period in the event that the candidate has not been able to pass a content test for the area in which they are seeking endorsement. The bill

received unanimous approval from the committee, but will be brought back with an amendment due to opposition from the Illinois Education Association.

HB 5364 (Benton-D; Plainfield) would require school districts to provide remote learning opportunities to students who are dependents of military personnel, and who are housed in temporary housing and are in between school district enrollments. Several organizations representing school districts expressed concerns about the logistics of the proposal, and the sponsor agreed to hold the bill for an amendment following discussion with members of the committee about their concerns with the bill, as well.

HB 4955 (Scherer-D; Decatur) was brought back to committee with an amendment that changed the bill proposal to prohibit ISBE from providing funding for assessments to students in grades K through 6. The Representative continues her efforts to reduce what she believes is bloat of high-stakes standardized testing for Illinois students, and is carrying this initiative for the Illinois Federation of Teachers. Her intent is to ensure that ISBE does not mandate any standardized testing other than what the federal government requires for students in grades K through 6, and the bill does not intend to interfere with school district decisions to determine what additional assessments shall be locally administered to students. The bill received unanimous approval from the committee members.

House State Government Committee

HB 4737 (Costa Howard-D; Lombard) is an initiative of IASBO and intends to clarify how vendors are ranked when governmental units, including school districts, intend to utilize a joint cooperative purchasing program. The bill received unanimous approval from the committee.

House Environment and Energy Committee

HB 4196 (Moylan-D; Des Plaines) proposes the establishment of a Fleet Electrification Incentive program under the Environmental Protection Act to provide grants to fleet owners and operators in Illinois to promote the use of eligible electric vehicles. The program offers grants based on vehicle classes, with additional incentives for specific types of vehicles and emphasizes the impact of fleet operations on pollution in designated communities. Grants would be awarded on a competitive basis according to funding availability and are based on the Class of vehicle, offering varying grant amounts for different vehicle classes. The program allows for the combination of grants with other public incentives, albeit not exceeding 80% of the vehicle's purchase price, and sets aside 20% of the appropriated funds for grants towards the purchase of electric school buses.

Senate Revenue Committee

SB 2911 (Ventura-D; Joliet) prohibits commercial or industrial property owners from receiving distributions from a tax reimbursement account, in the event they are already receiving a tax incentive as the result of a tax incentivized development established by an intergovernmental agreement.

Weekly Wrap-Up

This week marked the final week of session before the legislators take a short breather for their spring break. We continue to see a large volume of bills assigned to committee hearings, but only a handful of proposals end up actually being heard for consideration once the committees convene. With the House committee deadline approaching rapidly on Friday, April 5th, we could be in store for a wild week when the members of the General Assembly return from their scheduled break on Tuesday, April 2nd. Although you likely won't hear an update from us next week, we anticipate a lengthy Capitol Watch for you on April 5th! Stay tuned!

We hope you all have a restful, relaxing, and rejuvenating spring break!

Sincerely,

Your Government Relations Team



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