



# 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

May 31, 2018

Dear Colleagues:

As we turn the page to the month of June, the legislative calendar will see a final push before campaign season begins in earnest. This week has also seen much activity shift north to Mackinac Island for the Detroit Regional Chamber's annual policy conference. A recap of recent happenings follows below, but first, here are a few very important housekeeping items:

## **1. 2018-19 Membership Invoices Forthcoming**

Please watch for your School Equity Caucus membership invoice for the 2018-19 school year coming soon. Once again, we have been able to keep our dues rates frozen, marking the eleventh consecutive year that rates have been unchanged!

Your membership in the Caucus is critically important. In addition to the monthly *Caucus Newsletter* and published-as-necessary *Information Alert*, your membership makes our efforts on your behalf possible. The Caucus has consistently helped set the tone for the school budget discussion by bringing the need and importance of school funding adequacy and equity to the legislative table.

Through these efforts, including insuring the 2X formula remains part of the Foundation Allowance allocation, fully 75% of districts in the state are now at the same basic funding level, with more to be added this year. This progress is part of the reason funding discussions are also now shifting to include capital project, transportation, CTE, special education, and other systemic inequities.

If you are retiring or otherwise leaving your district at the end of the year, please consider sending in your Caucus invoice before departing. It's always much easier to demonstrate the value of Caucus membership to new superintendents once they have received the Newsletters and Alerts and better understand our focus and activities.

We appreciate your ongoing support as we advocate on your district's behalf in Lansing. The School Equity Caucus continues to make an impact, and we are determined to keep the cause of equity front and center for all students in the state of Michigan.

## **2. Thanks to Our Board of Directors!**

We would not be able to do the work we do without the efforts put forward by the School Equity Caucus Board of Directors. These superintendents have given of their time and talents to help move the cause of equity forward on behalf of Michigan's children. The 2017-18 Board of Directors has included:

- **Region 1**            Dan Reattior (Eastern UP ISD)
- **Region 2**            Joe Powers (Crawford-AuSable)
- **Region 3**            Mike Shibler (Rockford)
- **Region 4**            Jan Amsterburg (Gratiot-Isabella RESD)
- **Region 5**            Joe Murphy (Huron ISD)
- **Region 6**            John Deiter (DeWitt)
- **Region 7**            Joe Lopez (Branch ISD)
- **Region 8**            Mark Haag (Lenawee ISD)
- **At-Large**            Terry Boguth (Coldwater)
- **At-Large**            Brent Holcomb (Lewis Cass ISD)
- **At-Large**            Patrick Kreger (Union City)
- **At-Large**            David Schulte (Shiawassee RESD)

A special thanks goes to Joe Lopez for his years of dedicated service to the Caucus and the schools and children we represent. Joe is retiring this year, and he will be very much missed!

Any members wishing to learn more about serving on the Board of Directors are encouraged to email ([schoolequitycaucus@gmail.com](mailto:schoolequitycaucus@gmail.com)) or call (269-806-6159).

## **3. Budget Process on Track**

With the May Consensus Revenue Estimating Conference (CREC) in the rear view mirror, the key players in the budget process are working through the areas of difference that remain between the three competing proposals (from the Governor, the House, and the Senate). Please reference the Information Alert sent out on May 16 for more detailed information regarding the estimates agreed to by the CREC.

In short, the rosy revenue outlook from two weeks ago has left the legislature with more money than expected to play with during an election year. The School Aid Fund (SAF) is estimated to have \$159.5 million more in revenue available from the current year than was predicted at the previous CREC in January. Added to the additional \$110.4 million projected for next year, this means that the State may have nearly \$270 million in additional funding available in the SAF. Similarly, the state's General Fund (GF/GP) is also seen as being up by approximately \$228 million over the two years.

There are many potential areas being looked at by legislators, but those leading the way appear to be making deposits into the state's rainy day fund, providing funding in areas related to school safety, and devoting more General Fund dollars to roads. Keep in mind that more and more SAF funding continues to be diverted to the GF/GP, and the additional funding available would make proposed additional diversions this year unnecessary. However, the long-term funding pressures on the GF/GP make it unlikely

that we will see any change to the basic structure of the budget bills already in process this year.

Work continues to be done to delay implementation of the most onerous elements of the Section 31a (At Risk) “accountability” measures. Additionally, we continue to advocate for a start to specific per pupil transportation funding (a placeholder has been included in the House version of the budget); while such an earmark is unlikely to make it to the final budget, we are pleased that the conversation is being had.

We will update you further on budget news as it becomes available from the negotiations within the conference committee. We should have a good idea of the final structure within the next week or two.

#### **4. “Marshall Plan” Moves to the House**

This week the Senate approved \$100 million in expenditures for the 2018-19 school year to fund Governor Snyder’s “Marshall Plan for Talent” (SB 941). The bill will now move on to the House, which previously approved only \$75 million worth of the expenditures contained in the plan.

As passed, it is estimated that \$61.2 million of the total would be paid directly to K-12 districts and ISD’s through MDE’s consolidated grant process including:

- \$29.9 million to create and expand competency-based programs in “high-demand” fields
- \$18.5 million in competitive grants for equipment purchases (a notable increase from the originally-proposed amount)
- \$10.5 million for career navigators
- \$2.3 million in incentive payments to districts and stipends for students who successfully earn a credential in a high-demand field. These payments would be distributed as a \$250 stipend to the student and a \$250 payment to the district.

Additionally, \$4 million would go to funding for the MiBright Future career preparation program, and \$4 million to an innovative educator program. Of the remaining funds, the largest amount (\$20 million) would go to scholarships for low income students. The rest of the money would mainly go to various state departments for administration and/or for awareness programs.

Funding for the Marshall Plan is coming from the State’s Higher Education Student Loan Fund (which currently has a surplus balance of more than \$140 million).

While the goals of this program are certainly good, concern remains with the equity of the mechanisms (a grant-funding model) through which these funds will be distributed. Furthermore, the program, as currently constituted, does not provide enough support for those areas of the state lacking strong CTE programs.

As noted above, the House had made significant changes to the outline of the plan on its first time through the chamber. Changes in the Senate plan seem responsive to the differences in the House version (including more expenditures on equipment than were

originally incorporated), and the strong 30-2 approval margin in the Senate appear to give the bill momentum moving forward.

## **5. School Safety Legislation**

As noted above, school safety has become a “hot” issue, especially in this election year. Dozens of bills have been introduced, most of which are still in committee. Of those that have moved so far, many are mirrored between the two houses, and we still expect to see much more action in this arena over the next few weeks.

On the Senate side, here is a quick list of bills that have recently made it out of committee:

- **SB 957** – Extends the life of the OK2SAY program.
- **SB 958** – Requires annual reporting to the State Police on attempted acts of violence on school grounds, and threats made off of school grounds that are directed at schools, staff, or students.
- **SB 959** – Requires active shooter response training for all law enforcement officers.
- **SB 982** – Creates an Office of School Safety within the State Police. This office would apply for federal school safety grants, and oversee distribution of grants to schools for the purposes of improving school security.
- **SB 990** – Mandates consultation with local law enforcement before beginning construction or major renovation of facilities.
- **SB 991** – Requires districts to identify an emergency contact and provide that information to the State Police.

Earlier the full Senate passed SB 601 which would provide \$18.65 million in funding in the current fiscal year for competitive school safety grants, a new school emergency notification system with a “panic button” app, and additional financial support for the OK2SAY program.

In the House, the following bills have been passed and sent to the Senate:

- **HB 5828** – Creates a School Safety Commission to establish school safety standards, oversee inspection of every school building in the state, and administer a grant program for safety improvements.
- **HB 5829** – Requires districts to designate a School Safety Liaison to identify and evaluate safety measures under the coordination of the afore-described School Safety Commission.
- **HB 5830** – Mandates new safety measures to be incorporated into any new school construction or major renovation.
- **HB 5850** – Similar to SB 957, continues the OK2SAY program.
- **HB 5851** – Companion to SB 958 requiring annual reporting to the State Police on attempted acts of violence on school grounds, and threats made off of school grounds that are directed at schools, staff, or students.
- **HB 5852** – Like SB 959, requires active shooter response training for all law enforcement officers.

The legislature has still not moved forward on funding for the hiring of additional School Resource Officers, and to make our schools measurably safer, the legislature will need to commit significantly more resources than they have done so far.

## **6. Nassar Bills Passed by the House**

As has been widely covered in media outlets, the House has passed a series of bills (27 in all) responding to the fallout from the Larry Nassar scandal. In the end, the statute of limitations for both criminal and civil action in sexual assault cases was extended to ten years. Additionally, the list of mandatory reporters of suspected child abuse/neglect was expanded to include physical therapists, their assistants, and athletic trainers; in the final legislation, that list did not include coaches. The package also included a bill mandating education on sexual assault and abuse in grades 6-12.

The package has now returned to the Senate, and final approval is expected in the near future.

## **7. Other Legislation Being Monitored**

A host of other legislation remains under consideration. Here are just a couple of the bills currently receiving attention:

- **HB 5086** – This bill makes date changes and other modifications to the law allowing local governments (including schools) to be reimbursement for revenue losses due to the reductions made in the Personal Property Tax. Of primary importance to schools is a change allowing for reimbursement on debt millages approved prior to January 1, 2015 (instead of the current date of January 1, 2013). Estimates of revenue lost would need to be reported to the Department of Treasury by August 1. The bill has passed the Senate Finance Committee and has gone to the Senate floor.
- **HB 5214** – This proposal would require dental screenings for all entering kindergarteners similar to existing hearing and vision screening, and would provide a parental “opt-out” provision. The bill also contains language stating that it would not go into effect unless it is funded by the legislature.

-----

Here's to a wonderful end to the school year! I hope you enjoy some well-deserved rest in the weeks ahead!

As always, please be in touch with questions or concerns.



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