



# Legislative Update

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## **BUDGET**

The Senate Appropriations Committee decided the committee's position on key funding items in HCS/HB 2 (Fitzpatrick), the K-12 budget bill for the 2018 fiscal year, on April 11.

As expected, the Senate committee version of HB 2 cuts funding of the school formula back to roughly last year's core level. This leaves open a range of \$48 million from essentially no increase to full funding (based on the reduced funding level created with enactment of SB 586 in 2016), when the formula is addressed in conference committee. The Senate committee accepted the House position to restore pupil transportation funding to the current year level, for a total of \$105 million including \$37 million in general revenue. The committee also restored \$7.8M in district funding for the costs of public placement of students in state custody.

## **SENATE RE-PERFECTS EDUCATION SAVINGS ACCOUNTS/TRANSFER BILL**

The Senate reconsidered and then re-perfected SS#2/SCS/SB 313 (Koenig) on April 11. The re-perfection did not include substantive debate, and was required to correct a technical error in the drafting of the bill. The bill was referred to the Fiscal Review Committee, and must be approved by that committee before being taken up by the Senate for final approval. The committee conducted a hearing on April 13 but did not take a vote on the bill. The fiscal note indicates an unknown cost that could "greatly exceed" \$35 million once implemented.

The bill would create a new 100% state tax credit capped at \$25 million per year for taxpayer contributions to third-party organizations that will use some of the proceeds to fund accounts that parents can use to pay private school tuition and other expenses for their students. The Association opposes SB 313 and similar proposals to divert public funds to private schools not subject to the same standards of accountability, transparency and respect for the rights of students, staff and parents as apply to public schools.

## **HOUSE DEBATES STUDENT TRANSFER BILL**

The House debated HCS/HB 118 (Wood) on April 11. As of this writing, the House had not yet taken up the bill for perfection. The bill was approved on April 13 by the Fiscal Review Committee after a hearing to review the financial impact of the amendments added to the bill.

The bill relates to student transfers from unaccredited districts. The bill caps sending district tuition, allows receiving districts to respect class size standards and creates a process for intradistrict transfers within the unaccredited district.

The House adopted several amendments:

HA 1 (Wood) regarding appeals of transportation hardship transfer requests.

HA 2 (Basye) to add his HB 888 to allow school districts to cooperate with municipalities to provide pupil transportation.

HA 3 (Swan) to add her HB 457 to allow children who attend early childhood education programs that are under contracts with districts or charter schools to be included in the average daily attendance of the district or charter school.

HA 4 (Rowland) to add his HB 677 to allow a school district to use a calendar based on hours of attendance rather than hours and days of attendance, if the minimum number of hours is at least 1,044 hours of actual pupil attendance. The Association supports local control of school calendars and supports this provision.

HA 5 (Houghton) to add his HB 280 to restrict school district authority to set the opening date for the school term more than ten calendar days prior to the first Monday in September. The Association opposes this provision.

HA 6 (Morgan) to add the provisions of SB 362 (Hummel) to provide that a student receive instruction in Braille reading and writing as part of his or her individualized education plan unless instruction in Braille is determined not appropriate for the child.

## **CHARTER SCHOOLS**

The Senate Education Committee heard HCS/HB 634 (Roeber) on April 11. The bill would expand charter schools to all districts with at least one school that happened to have a building APR score below 60% for two years in any three-year period. This expansion will already apply to a large number of districts across the state. The bill opens the entire district to any number of charter schools at any grade level, not limited to the location or grade level of the affected school. Moreover, the new version also allows students from any other Missouri school district to enroll in these new charter schools, if space is available. The Association opposes the bill.

The House perfected two committee bills on April 12.

HCB 4 (Lauer) includes the provisions of HB 93, HB 94 and HB 799. The bill allows high school students to take either the ACT or the ACT WorkKeys test as a state-reimbursed test. The bill also allows a teacher to count hours spent in a local business externship as contact hours of professional development. This bill revises options for financial assistance through the Missouri Works Training Program. The Association supports the bill.

HCB 5 (Lauer) requires This bill requires each school district to offer a course on computer programming to all high school students. Students may count the course as an elective or practical arts credit. The course may be offered as an online course or through videoconferencing.

## **DISCRIMINATION AND WHISTLEBLOWER**

The House Special Committee on Litigation Reform approved SS#2/SCS/SB 43 (Romine) on April 10. The SS version makes several changes, including a change to the legal standard for determining that discrimination has occurred. The bill would make significant changes to the state's anti-discrimination law in employment, disability and housing. The bill also limits the state's "whistle-blower" protections. The Association believes these changes will make it harder to hold employers and their agents responsible for improper acts of discrimination. Missouri NEA believes that unfair, discriminatory treatment in the workplace should remain unlawful and opposes the bill

## **CAMPUS CARRY**

The House General Laws Committee approved HB 630 (Taylor) on April 11. The bill would largely remove the ability of governing boards to ban the carrying of concealed firearms on public college and university campuses. The Association believes that colleges and universities should have local control over the policies that control the presence of concealed weapons on campus and opposes this provision.

## **STUDENT FINANCIAL AID FOR VIRTUAL INSTITUTIONS**

The House gave final approval to HCS/HB 411 (Lightenegger) on April 13. The bill would allow students enrolled in virtual institutions to participate in the Access Missouri Financial Assistance Program. The HCS version includes the State Technical College in the provisions of the bill.

## **HOUSE ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION**

The committee heard several bills on April 10:

HB 98 (Swan) to authorize a tax credit for contributions to school foundations.

HB 280 (Houghton) and HB467 (Cookson). Both bills would restrict school district authority to set the opening date for the school term more than ten calendar days prior to the first Monday in September. The Association believes that school districts should have local control to set school calendar start and end dates.

HB 948 (Bahr) to allow computer science to count as a science course for purposes of high school graduation requirements.

HB 1186 (Trent) to revise many provisions regarding duties and procedures of the State Board of Education. The Association supports increased public access to State Board proceedings.

The committee voted on April 10 to approve HB 263 (Sommer) to require school districts to post certain financial information online for public access.

The committee voted on April 13 to approve HCS/HB 98 (Swan) regarding pre-paid tax credits for school foundations. The HCS specifies that the tax credits may not be sold.

## **SENATE EDUCATION**

The committee will hear several bills on April 11:

HB 758 (Cookson) to revise provisions relating to higher education program approval.

HB 469 (Gannon) to requires DESE to subsidize the exam fee for first-time takers of the high school equivalency degree exam. The Association supports the bill.

SB 491 (Silvey) to allow high school students to fulfill one unit of academic credit with a computer science course for any required science unit.

In addition to hearing bills, the committee approved several bills on April 11:

SCS/HCS/HB 138 (Spencer) to establish a new course access program by revising the current MoVIP. The program is available for students enrolled full-time in public school. The SCS is substantially similar to the SCS previously approved by the committee for SB 327 (Romine). The Association believes that virtual courses can play an important role for schools and students, and supports the bill.

SCS/HB 758 (Cookson) to revise provisions relating to higher education program approval. The SCS adds the provisions of SB 62 (Hegeman) to stabilize contributions to the College and University Retirement Plan (CURP), a defined contribution plan for instructional staff at four-year public institutions other than the University of Missouri. The Association supports the provision, which would help the CURP benefit remain a viable pension benefit.

SCS/HCS/HB 253 (Swan) to regarding the Career and Technical Education Advisory Council. The SCS includes provisions similar to SBs 44 and 63. The Association supports the bill.

HCS/HB 441 (Corlew) to grant greater freedom for student journalists. This year's version includes anti-retaliation provisions to protect student communications sponsors and other staff from possible retaliation by boards or administration for granting students greater editorial latitude as provided by the bill. The Association supports the bill.

SCS/HB 248 (Fitzwater) to establish a statewide, online STEM career awareness program for middle school students. The SCS places the program under DESE rather than DED and allows the program to be funded by donations as well as other state funds.

SCS/HCS/HB 631 (Redmon) to revise medical endorsement requirements for school bus drivers. The SCS adds the provisions of HB 560 (Redmon) regarding annual pre-trip inspection testing. The bill was approved as a Consent Bill.

## **HIGHER EDUCATION**

The House Higher Education Committee approved HCS/HB 984 (Kendrick) on April 12. The bill would create a work-study program within Department of Higher Education for students at Missouri public colleges and universities. The HCS expands the program to include graduate students and increases the amount available to students without demonstrated financial need.

## **SCHOOL RETIREMENT**

The House Pensions Committee heard several bills on April 10:

SB 62 (Hegeman) to stabilize the contribution rate of the College and University Retirement Plan (CURP), a defined contribution plan for instructional staff at four-year public institutions other than the University of Missouri. The Association supports the bill, which would help the CURP benefit remain a viable pension benefit.

HB 996 (Rhoads) to revise provisions relating to pension forfeiture. Current law provides that public employees, including school employees, forfeit their pension if they commit one of several work-related offenses, including theft of property valued at \$5,000 or more. The bill requires the employer, rather than the court, to notify the retirement plan if an employee has been found to have committed a work-related offense triggering the forfeiture provision.

HB 1085 (Walker) to modify provisions relating to the St. Louis Public School Retirement System to create a second-tier retirement plan for the St. Louis Public School Retirement System. The bill reduces the benefit factor for new hires and for new creditable service for existing staff, increases the employee contribution rate from 5% to 9% and changes from a Rule of 85 to a Rule of 80 for retirement.

## **CAPITOL ACTION DAYS**

MNEA Capitol Action Days continued on April 12 when MNEA-R members came to the Capitol. Capitol Action Days allow planned, face-to-face contact with legislators throughout the session.

For the dates that MNEA Board of Directors members selected for your Governance District and other details and contact information, please visit:

<http://www.mnea.org/Missouri/CapitolActionDays.aspx>