



Legislative Update

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LOCAL CONTROL OF SCHOOLS

The Senate debated the Senate Substitute version of SCS/SB 85 (Carter) on March 22, but did not bring the bill to a vote. The bill would allow school districts to choose to be exempt from MSIP accreditation and from all requirements of MSIP, APRs and school improvement plans.

The Senate Substitute version also specifies that the statewide MAP assessments will only be used for purposes required under federal law and school formula calculations. The bill also requires school districts to have locally-determined assessments aligned to local curriculum and to include local assessment results on school report cards. The bill also allows districts to choose to gain accreditation from a nationally-recognized accreditation agency. The Association supports greater local control on assessment and accreditation and supports the bill.

HOUSE BUDGET COMMITTEE

The committee met on March 23 to amend and approve the HCS versions of the state operating budget bills. As of this writing, the committee is still in session. The committee intends to complete work on the bills on March 23. This would allow the House to bring up the bills next week for floor debate, amendment and final approval. As of this writing, the HCS versions still make several significant cuts from the Governor's recommendations and the subcommittee versions. Those reductions include removing all state funding for public libraries in retaliation for their opposition to book banning policies and removing the Governor's proposed funding increases for expanded pre-K programs. The Association supports restoring these funds to the state budget.

SENATE APPROVES TWO TRANSGENDER-RELATED BILLS

After more than 13 hours of debate, the Senate gave first round approval to two bills relating to transgender youth. The Senate approved a four-year moratorium on gender-affirming care for minors in the Senate Substitute version of SB 49 (Mike Moon). After weeks of discussion, the Senate managed to reach a negotiated position on this controversial issue without resorting to a motion to force an end to debate, known as moving the Previous Question (PQ). Using the PQ motion is avoided in the Senate as it results in retaliatory, stalling tactics that threaten passage of any other legislation, including the budget.

The Senate also approved a four-year moratorium on transgender athletic participation in competitive girl's or women's events in public and private middle schools and high schools and public and private colleges in the Senate Substitute version of SB 39 (Holly Thompson-Rehder). This portion overrides

MSHSAA and NCAA policies on transgender athletic participation that seek to balance fairness and inclusion for athletes. The Association believes that educators should continue to establish the policies and procedures that govern the activities of Missouri students who participate in school activities and opposes SB 39.

CORPORATE AND PERSONAL INCOME TAX CUTS

The House gave final approval to HCS/HBs 816 and 660 (Dirk Deaton) on March 23. The bill contains several significant tax cuts. The bill lowers the top rate of personal income tax to 4.5% for calendar year 2024 and beyond, lowers the corporate tax rate to 2% and eventually to 1% and offers the maximum deduction of Social Security income, regardless of filing status or income. The provisions have a combined state cost of about \$1 billion. The Association is concerned that these further tax cuts will reduce the state's ability to invest in public education and other vital services and opposes the bill.

ADULT HIGH SCHOOLS

The House gave final approval to HB 447 (Bishop Davidson) on March 23. The bill allows siting a fifth adult high school in the Kansas City area. The bill also moves administration of adult high schools from DESE to the Department of Social Services. The state currently has four adult high schools created under state contract by MERS Goodwill. Adult high schools allow adults to obtain industry certifications and complete high school work to obtain a State Board approved high school diploma. Adult high schools also offer job placement services.

HOUSE ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The committee heard three bills on March 22:

HB 159 (Ian Mackey) regarding documenting and reporting school suspensions and consideration of alternatives to suspension.

HB 558 (Mike Haffner) to require DESE to use standardized test scores to give every school district and charter school a single letter grade based on a method dictated by the bill and creates NCLB style punishments for districts with low letter grades. This bill harkens back to the failed "test, blame and punish" mindset of the former, federal NCLB Act. The Association opposes the bill.

HB 529 (John Black) to modify the calculation of the base per pupil amount (State Adequacy Target) of the school funding formula. The bill raises the allowed annual increase in state revenues from 5% to 9% over the next four years. The bill also caps superintendent pay at 3.5 times average teacher salary and increases the placement requirement to the teacher's fund to 85% of state aid. The Association supports the increase to the formula calculation.

In addition to hearing bills, the committee voted to approve two bills:

HCS/HB 106 (Jerome Barnes) to require DESE to create language developmental milestones for children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

HB 232 (Gretchen Bangert) to require school districts and charter schools to provide instruction in cursive writing by the end of the fifth grade, including a proficiency test of competency in reading and writing cursive.

SENATE-EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

The committee hearing scheduled for March 21 was canceled due to overnight debate beginning the prior day. The committee met on March 23 and voted to approve three bills:

SB 226 (Schroer) to create a 100% tax credit for all tuition expenses for attending private K-12 schools or a non-resident school district. The Association believes that state-mandated parental option plans compromise free, equitable, universal and quality public education for every student and opposes the bill.

SB 234 (Ben Brown) to move school board elections to the November general election. The bill also allows school board candidates to also file for and be elected to serve in other elective offices.

SCS/SB 411 & 230 (Ben Brown) will allow home school students to participate in public school activities. The bill provides that districts may not prohibit home school students from trying out or auditioning for membership in an activity, and the bill also prohibits a district from being part of an association that prohibits home school participation in activities. The Association believes that educators should continue to establish the policies and procedures that govern school activities.

DRIVER'S EDUCATION COURSES

The House Government Efficiency and Downsizing Committee heard HB 603 (Reedy) on March 22. The bill would require the State Board to create a driver education program that public high schools, including charter high schools, will include in high school health curricula. The program will include habits and skills needed for the safe operation of motor vehicles, distracted driving hazards, and traffic stop procedures. The program does not require operation of a vehicle.

RESTRICTING DIVERSITY AND EQUITY POLICIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The House-Special Committee on Government Accountability approved an HCS version of HB 1196 (Doug Richey) on March 20. The bill is the creation of an out-of-state think tank, the Cicero Institute from Austin, Texas. The bill seeks to ban certain policies in public college admissions, contracting, hiring and promotions. The Association believes that school recruitment policies should seek to recruit and retain culturally diverse education professionals. The Association is concerned that the broad definitions and wording in the bill may prohibit schools from assessing and revising employment policies and practices to improve opportunities and increase applications from underrepresented groups. The Association opposes the bill.

STUDENT NEWSPAPERS

The Senate Progress and Development Committee heard SB 440 (Washington) on March 22. The bill would grant greater freedom for student journalists. The bill 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 bills. The Association supports the bill.

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