



Legislative Update

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BUDGET

The House approved the state operating budget bills on March 30. The HCS versions of HBs 1-13 (Cody Smith) made several significant cuts from the Governor's recommendations. Those reductions include removing all state funding for public libraries in retaliation for their opposition to book banning policies.

The House adopted amendments to restrict any use of HB 2 (K-12) or HB 3 (higher education) funds for diversity, equity or inclusion programs. This language appears to apply to state funds provided to DESE, school districts, DHEWD and public colleges, but would not apply to local or other funds. The Association opposes these unneeded and harmful provisions.

HONESTY IN EDUCATION

The House Elementary and Secondary Education Committee approved two bills relating to curriculum and instruction on March 29. HCS/HB 482 (Ben Baker) and HCS/HB 627 (Christofanelli) each create new provisions concerning instruction, access to information about school finance and curriculum and parent information access. The HCS/HB 482 includes the provisions of HB 192 (Ed Lewis) to create a Teacher Bill of Rights. The Association is concerned that some of these provisions in HB 482 and HB 627 may adversely affect the freedom of teachers to provide the honest education our students deserve and opposes both bills.

RESTRICTIONS ON THE INITIATIVE PETITION PROCESS

The Senate debated HCS/HJR 43 (Henderson) on March 29, but did not bring the measure to a vote. The Association is concerned that the measure will make it more difficult for Missouri citizens to bring forward and gain approval on measures of interest brought by the initiative petition process and opposes the joint resolutions.

HOUSE PERFECTS OMNIBUS EDUCATION BILL

The House gave first round approval to an omnibus version of HB 497 (Ed Lewis) on March 28.

The House added several provisions by amendment:

HA 2 (Gretchen Bangert) to add HB 232 to require schools to teach cursive writing in fifth grade.

HA 3 (Peggy McGaugh) to add HB 914 regarding filling urban school district board vacancies. The amendment requires any vacancy on an urban school district board in Kansas City or St. Louis City to be filled by appointment by the remaining members of the board, as is the case for other urban school districts.

HA 4 (Kathy Steinhoff) to remove the requirement for the entry level test required for admission into a teacher preparation program.

HA 5 (John Black) to add HB 529 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.

HA 6 (Willard Haley) to increase the minimum teacher's salary to \$38,000 and \$46,000 for teachers with ten year's teaching experience in public school and a master's degree in a related academic field. The amendment attempts to address needed funding in the short run by creating a grant fund for three years. However, the amendment does not revise state aid to address the long-term funding needed to implement and sustain these salary increases.

The originally filed HB 497 renames and revises the existing "Urban Flight and Rural Needs Scholarship Program". This program was created in the late 1990s but was defunded in the early 2000s. The bill increases the maximum number scholarships to 300 and provides scholarships for students who commit to teach in hard to staff schools or hard to staff subject areas.

The HCS also includes the provisions of several other bills:

HB 190 (Ed Lewis) to allow school districts to identify hard-to-staff schools and hard-to-staff subject areas and designate a higher placement on the salary schedule when hiring such teachers. The HCS clarifies that the teacher salary schedule remains applicable to all teachers.

HB 496 (Ed Lewis) to enact several school retirement provisions, including a 2.55% benefit factor for 32 or more years of PSRS service and extending the term of teacher critical shortage work after retirement to a maximum of four years.

HB 116 (Brenda Shields) to require schools to have bleeding control kits available in high-traffic areas of schools.

HB 70 (Chris Dinkins) to allow school staff other than teachers and administrators to serve as school protection officers.

HB 809 (Michael O'Donnell) to require DESE to convene a work group to develop academic performance standards for the half credit course in personal finance required for high school graduation.

HB 483 (Ben Baker) create a policy that would allow students to receive credit for participation in out-of-classroom learning experiences as approved by the State Board of Education, a school board, or a charter school.

HB 669 (Ron Copeland) to eliminate the requirement that schools using the Rap Back program for notifications of law violations must require all employees to undergo an additional fingerprint background check every six years.

The Association supports the provisions for teacher recruitment scholarships, school retirement, background checks, state school aid and teacher program entry exams. The provision regarding salary schedule placement should be a matter for collective bargaining at the local level.

RETIREMENT

The House Pensions Committee approved a House Committee Substitute version for HB 257 (Brad Pollitt) on March 28. The committee substitute enacts several school retirement provisions, including a 2.55% benefit factor for 32 or more years of PSRS service and extending the term of teacher critical shortage work after retirement to a maximum of four years. The Association supports the bill.

The Senate Committee on Veterans, Military Affairs and Pensions heard SB 436 (Jill Carter) on March 29. The bill would enact additional provisions regarding the investments of all Missouri public pension systems, including PSRS and PEERS. The PSRS Board of Trustees has a fiduciary duty to invest for the benefit of the members of the system. The bill would require that pension systems shall not consider environmental, social or governance factors in a manner that would override their fiduciary duties.

The Systems already have a policy of this type, but the current wording of SB 436 would interfere with the current practices of PSRS and PEERS and force the Systems to significantly change investment allocations in ways that would likely reduce return on investments. This would force increased contributions for districts and employees and reduce the funding status of the Systems. The Association opposes the bill as filed. Substituting the language of HB 769 (Bill Owen) would accomplish the same policy goal without harming the status and function of the Systems.

CAREER TECH CERTIFICATES

The House gave first round approval to HCS/HB 76 (Ann Kelley) on March 29. The bill would expand the A+ Schools scholarships by creating the A+ Certificate Program to include qualified students attending in industry credential programs that would not qualify under the current A+ program.

SCHOOL FUNDING

The House Elementary and Secondary Education Committee approved HCS/HB 529 (John Black) on March 29. The bill would 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 HCS version removes the restrictions on superintendent pay. The Association supports this increase to the formula calculation.

SCHOOL SUSPENSIONS

The House Elementary and Secondary Education Committee approved HCS/HB 159 (Ian Mackey) on March 29. The bill adds provisions on documenting and reporting school suspensions and consideration of alternatives to suspension. The bill also prevents suspensions in grades K-3 unless authorized under the Safe Schools Act. Committee members pointed out that further revision is likely

needed to allow consideration of suspensions for offenses that are significant but are not listed in the Safe Schools Act.

PROTECTION AGAINST DISCRIMINATION

The Senate General Laws Committee heard SB 60 (Razer) on March 29. The bill would revise the Missouri Human Rights Act regarding employment, disability and housing to make discrimination based upon a person's sexual orientation or gender identity an unlawful discriminatory practice. The Association believes in the equality of all individuals and supports the bill.

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.

HOUSE-ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The committee heard three bills on March 29:

HB 350 (Phil Christofanelli) to increase funding amounts under the ESA voucher program from HB 349 (2021) to include school formula weights for poverty, special education and English language learners.

HB 633 (Ann Kelley) to grant flexibility to schools for school employee training requirements. Schools may place current annual requirements on a rotating basis based on school and employee need. The Association believes this will allow more efficient use of staff training time and better meet student and school needs. The Association supports the bill.

HB 883 (Scott Cupps) to require DESE to convene a work group to develop academic performance standards for health and family education. The bill also changes the require one-half credit in health education to health and family education.

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The committee heard two bills on March 29:

SB 166 (Jill Carter) to prohibit certain types of regulation of public and private schools by cities and counties.

SB 410 (Andrew Koenig) to restrict the use of diversity, equity and inclusion policies by state-funded health-care degree programs, health care providers, health care licensing boards, or state-funded health

care contractors. The Association is concerned that the measure could interfere with the affected programs and jeopardize their accreditation status.

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