



Legislative Update

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CAPITOL ACTION DAYS

Capitol Action Days are part of the Association's plan to promote positive policy for public education. MNEA's Capitol Action Days occur regularly on Wednesdays during legislative session and continued this week on April 5. For more information and to register for your Capitol Action Day, please visit www.mnea.org/CAD

OPEN ENROLLMENT

The Senate Education and Workforce Development Committee voted to approve HCS/HB 253 (Brad Pollitt) on April 6. The bill primarily allows students to transfer between school districts under certain conditions. The Association opposes the perfected version of the bill.

The Association believes that public school choice plans with state funding may harm students and our public schools unless essential criteria are in place for implementing, monitoring, and evaluating their effectiveness. Interdistrict choice laws in other states have tended to increase racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic segregation of school communities, and the House removed a provision in HB 253 that was designed to limit those harmful effects.

HOUSE PASSES OMNIBUS EDUCATION BILL

The House gave final approval to an omnibus version of HB 497 (Ed Lewis) on April 4. The bill now moves the Senate for its consideration. 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 final version passed by the House includes the following other provisions:

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

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

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.

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

HB 433 (Ed Lewis) to increase the minimum teacher's salary requirements to \$38,000 and \$46,000 for teachers with ten years of teaching experience in public school and a master's degree in a related academic field. The amendment creates a grant fund for three years but does not revise state aid to address the long-term funding needed to implement and sustain these salary increases.

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 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 529 (John Black) to add 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.

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.

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 914 (Peggy McGaugh) to add 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.

A provision added by Rep. Kathy Steinhoff to remove the requirement for the entry-level test required for admission into a teacher preparation program.

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.

FULL-TIME VIRTUAL SCHOOLS

The Senate Education and Workforce Development Committee voted to approve HB 827 (Phil Christofanelli) and SB 545 (Caleb Rowden) on April 6. These similar bills make minor revisions

to the new structure of accountability, enrollment, participation, and finance created for full-time virtual schools last session in SS/HCS/HB 1552 (Richey). The bills include additional clarifying language regarding attendance and payment provisions and enrollment policies. The Association supports the bills.

RETIREMENT

The House Pensions Committee heard SS/SB 75 (Rusty Black) on April 4. The Association supports the bill. The bill restores the 2.55% benefit factor for 32 or more years of PSRS service credit.

The bill also increases the earnings limit for PSRS retirees working part-time in PEERS positions. This limit is now 60% of the \$25,000 minimum teacher's salary (currently \$15,000). For the first five years, the new limit will be 133% of the Social Security earnings limit for persons under full retirement age (currently \$28,249) and will then be 100% of the Social Security earnings limit thereafter (currently \$21,240).

The bill also extends the critical shortage employment option from two years to four years and increases the allowed number of critical shortage teaching positions in a district to the greater of five or one percent of the number of teaching positions in the district.

The bill also includes the provisions of SB 339 (Greg Razer). This portion of the bill provides a same-sex domestic partner pop-up provision for retirees. The provision has similar documentation requirements to the divorce pop-up provision in current law.

ADULT HIGH SCHOOLS

The Senate gave final approval to SS/SB 199 (Holly Thompson Rehder) on April 6. 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.

HIGHER EDUCATION FREE SPEECH ISSUES

The House gave first-round approval to HB 136 (Brad Hudson) on April 4. The bill would prevent a public college from limiting recognition to belief-based student associations that require leaders to adhere to its beliefs, practice requirements, or standards of conduct, but the bill did not pass. The Association believes that organizations are strengthened by offering memberships on a nondiscriminatory basis. The Association opposes the bill.

OPTIONAL COURSE IN THE BIBLE

The House General Laws Committee heard SB 34 (Karla May) on April 4. SB 34 is a symbolic bill stating that public schools may offer elective courses in the Hebrew and Christian

scriptures. Existing state law already provides that books of a religious nature may be used in public schools as part of instruction in elective courses in literature and history, if such books are used in a manner consistent with the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment to the United States Constitution.

CAREER TECH CERTIFICATES

The House gave final approval to HCS/HB 76 (Ann Kelley) on April 4. 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.

STUDENT NEWSPAPERS

The Senate Progress and Development Committee voted to approve SB 440 (Washington) on April 5. 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.

HOUSE ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The committee heard three bills on April 5:

HB 492 (Jim Murphy) to require DESE to create a media literacy and critical thinking pilot program. The program will address media literacy, develop strategies for student learning in classroom curricula, and demonstrate various literacy strategies used.

HB 1163 (Tara Peters) to require parental consent for changes to individualized education programs (IEPs).

HB 901 (Brad Pollitt) to create an Education Stabilization Fund. The bills allow the state to appropriate money to the fund and, in years where revenues fall short of projections, money may be taken from the fund to help fully fund the school funding formula. The committee postponed the scheduled hearing on three similar bills: HB 821 (Jeff Knight), HB 843 (Rick Francis), and HB 946 (Mike Henderson).

In addition to hearing bills, the committee voted to approve two bills on April 5:

HCS/HB 350 (Phil Christofanelli) would 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. The HCS expands the ESA program to include otherwise eligible pre-K students, raises the overall tax credit program cap from \$25 million to \$50 million, and includes HB 118 (Brenda Shields) to gradually expand pre-K funding through the school formula for programs operated by school districts and charter schools. The Association supports increased pre-K funding for public schools but is concerned that state-mandated parental option plans like

the ESA voucher compromise free, equitable, universal, and quality public education for every student.

HCS/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.

SENATE EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

In addition to open enrollment and full-time virtual bills, the committee is voted to approve several other bills week:

SB 17 (Lauren Arthur) pertaining to the school funding formula. The bill would increase the base per-pupil amount, known as the State Adequacy Target (SAT), and increase the district poverty pupil weight for many districts. These changes are expected to increase the SAT from \$6375 to \$6679 and increase total formula cost by about \$284 million. The SAT will increase about 4.8%. This increase is greater than the entire net increase in the SAT since the current formula was created in 2005. The Association supports this long overdue reform to provide recognition of increasing school costs.

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

SB 363 (Steven Roberts) to provide that the St. Louis City school board shall fill any school board vacancy that occurs outside of the normal election cycle.

SB 381 (Holly Thompson Rehder) 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.

SCS/SB 410 (Andrew Koenig) to restrict the use of diversity, equity, and inclusion policies by state-funded healthcare degree programs, healthcare providers, healthcare licensing boards, or state-funded healthcare contractors. The Association is concerned that the measure could interfere with the affected programs and jeopardize their accreditation status.

Legislative Update 2023

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