



Legislative Update

By Otto Fajen
MNEA Legislative Director
Otto.fajen@mnea.org

Number 14
April 13, 2023
www.mnea.org

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 the legislative session and continued this week on April 12 when MNEA-R members came to the Capitol. For more information and to register for your Capitol Action Day, please visit <https://www.mnea.org/CAD>.

CHARTER SCHOOL EXPANSION

The Senate debated SB 304 (Eigel) on April 12 but did not bring the bill to a vote. The original bill would allow charter schools to be sponsored by outside entities (other than the local school board) and operate in many districts around the state. The Association opposes the original bill. The Association believes that all charter schools should be subject to the same standards of accountability, transparency, and respect for the rights of students, parents, and staff as are applicable to traditional public schools.

Sen. Eigel laid the bill over after offering a floor substitute that limited charter school expansion to Boone County and St. Charles County. The substitute also includes the provisions of SS/SCS/SB 85 (Jill Carter) to allow school districts to choose to be exempt from MSIP accreditation and from all requirements of MSIP, APRs, and school improvement plans. The substitute also specifies that the statewide MAP assessments will only be used for purposes required under federal law and school formula calculations.

OPEN ENROLLMENT

The Senate is expected to debate HCS/HB 253 (Brad Pollitt) soon. The bill is currently the second of only three House bills now on the Senate calendar for debate and approval. 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.

HONESTY IN EDUCATION/PARENT INFORMATION ACCESS

The House Elementary and Secondary Education Committee heard SS/SCS/SBs 4, 42, and 89 (Koenig) on April 12. The Association remains concerned that the bill will adversely affect the freedom of teachers to provide the honest education our students deserve and opposes the bill.

The perfected version of the bill includes many provisions, including some that were not contained in the original bill. The bill requires schools to adopt curricula at least two months prior to the school term, revises and updates the school report card provisions, creates a state transparency portal for all school curricula, textbooks, source materials, and syllabi, and adds regulations regarding school-issued devices.

The perfected bill also increases the school formula per pupil weight factor for poverty from 25% to 30% and exempts magnet schools from desegregation programs from inefficiency penalties for transportation aid. The bill also includes a revised version of SB 137 (Eslinger) regarding civics education training.

TEACHER COMPENSATION

The House gave first-round approval to HB 471 (John Black) on April 12. The bill authorizes state agencies to offer financial incentives for employee retention and to reward "exemplary achievement". The House approved an amendment to allow similar incentives for teachers. The House also included 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 Association believes decisions regarding extra compensation and salary schedule placement should be a matter for collective bargaining at the local level.

HOME SCHOOL ACTIVITY PARTICIPATION

The Senate gave final approval to SCS/SB 411 & 230 (Ben Brown) on April 13. The bill 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.

The Senate added several amendments, including:

- 1) a requirement that school districts in charter counties or cities with a population over 30,000 must have a five-day school week unless district voters approve a four-day school week,
- 2) a provision that the St. Louis City school board shall fill any school board vacancy that occurs outside of the normal election cycle,

3) the language of SB 34 (Karla May) providing that public schools may offer elective courses in the Hebrew and Christian scriptures, and

4) the language of SB 122 (Karla May) to provide that a child may be excused from attendance at school if the child is unable to attend school due to mental or behavioral health concerns, provided that the school receives documentation from a mental health professional.

TRANSGENDER ATHLETIC PARTICIPATION

The House gave first-round approval to HCS/HB 183 (Burger) on April 11. The bill prohibits transgender athletes from participating in competitive girls' or women's events in public or private middle schools, high schools, or institutions of higher education.

The House General Laws Committee heard SS/SB 39 (Holly Thompson-Rehder) on April 11. The bill is similar to HB 183 and places a four-year moratorium on transgender athletic participation in competitive girls' or women's events in public and private middle schools and high schools and public and private colleges.

Both bills override 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 these bills.

ADULT HIGH SCHOOLS

The Senate General Laws Committee heard HB 447 (Bishop Davidson) on April 12. 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.

SCHOOL PROTECTION OFFICERS

The Senate Transportation, Infrastructure, and Public Safety Committee heard HB 70 (Dinkins) on April 12. The bill allows school districts to designate other school personnel (besides administrators and teachers) as a school protection officer.

RETIREMENT

The House Pensions Committee heard HB 867 (Jamie Gragg) relating to PSRS and PEERS exemptions for working after retirement. The bill extends (through FY 27) the three-year provision enacted last year to allow retirees to work as a part-time or temporary substitute teacher without an hour limitation. The bill also waives all restrictions on retirees working in a PEERS position through FY 27. The bill is projected to have an adverse financial impact on the Systems, though it is difficult to assess how these provisions would change employee and retiree behavior.

HOUSE ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The committee voted to approve HB 901 (Brad Pollitt) on April 12. The bill would 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.

SENATE EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

The committee heard two bills on April 11:

SB 508 (Ben Brown) to establish a procedure for school board recall elections. The Association is concerned that the listed reasons for recall are very broad and could allow recall attempts based on little more than disagreeing with prior election results.

SB 603 (Mary Elizabeth Coleman) to provide that district where a student lives will pay costs for educational services rendered by a resident district while a child is receiving care from a residential treatment facility in the resident district.

Legislative Update 2023

Missouri National Education Association
1810 East Elm Street
Jefferson City, MO 65101-4174
(573) 634-3202 or (800) 392-0236
www.mnea.org

Phil Murray, President
Rebeka McIntosh, Vice President
DeeAnn Aull, Executive Director
Otto Fajen, Legislative Director
Sandy Smith, Information Specialist/Exec. Adm. Asst.