



Legislative Update

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HONESTY IN EDUCATION/PARENT INFORMATION ACCESS

The Senate Committee on Education and Workforce voted on a party-line vote to approve a Senate Committee Substitute (SCS) version of SBs 4, 42 and 89 (Koenig) on January 24. The committee version makes some changes regarding parent information access. The Association remains concerned that the bill would adversely affect the freedom of teachers to provide the honest education our students deserve and opposes the bill. The bill has been reported to the floor and may be taken up for debate by the Senate next week.

STATE BUDGET

Several committees met this week to begin work on the state budget for next fiscal year.

The House-Appropriations-Education Committee met on January 23 to hear testimony from community colleges and four-year public institutions. The committee met again on January 25 and January 26 to work through the K-12 education budget books with budget leaders from DESE.

The House-Budget Committee met on January 23 to hear presentations from the State Budget Office and state agencies on HB 14 (Cody Smith), the supplemental budget bill for additional funding items needed during the current fiscal year.

The Senate-Appropriations Committee met on January 24 to hear an overview of the Governor's FY 2024 Budget Recommendations.

OPEN ENROLLMENT

The Senate-Education and Workforce Development Committee heard SB 5 (Koenig) on January 24. The bill primarily allows students to transfer between school districts under certain conditions. The Missouri NEA 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.

SB 5 also allows students to open enroll into charter schools from other districts. The Association opposes this expansion of charter schools. The Association believes that the charter law should be revised to ensure that charter schools are only sponsored by school boards following an impact study on the proposal. Further, all charter schools should be subject to the same standards of transparency,

accountability and respect for the rights of students, parents and staff as are applicable to district schools.

The House-Elementary and Secondary Education Committee heard HB 253 (Pollitt) on January 25. This bill also allows students to transfer between school districts but does not allow students to open enroll into charter schools from other districts. The Association will oppose any effort to include this charter expansion in the bill.

STATE FUNDING FOR HOME SCHOOL AND PRIVATE SCHOOL EXPENSES

The Senate-Education and Workforce Development Committee also heard SB 81 (Mary Elizabeth Coleman) on January 24. This bill creates state-funded open enrollment to private schools and provides state tax credit funding up to the state adequacy target (SAT) amount for expenses for each home school student. The Association believes that federally or state-mandated parental option plans compromise free, equitable, universal and quality public education for every student and opposes the bill.

RESTRICTIONS ON THE INITIATIVE PETITION PROCESS

The House-Elections and Elected Officials Committee met on January 24 to hear five joint resolution that would change the initiative petition process. The resolutions include HJRs 18 and 30 (Ed Lewis), HJRs 24 and 25 (Davidson) and HJR 43 ((Henderson). Each resolution would either increase the number of signatures required or raise the approval requirements for constitutional amendments, or both. The Association is concerned that these measures will make it significantly more difficult for Missouri citizens to bring forward and gain approval on measures of interest brought by the initiative petition process and opposes the resolutions.

The committee met again on January 26 and approved House Committee Substitute (HCS) versions for HJR 43 and HJR 30. The committee also voted to approve HJR 24 and HJR 25

TRANSGENDER ATHLETIC PARTICIPATION

The House General Laws Committee heard three bills affecting transgender athletic participation on January 24: HB 337 (Cook), HB 183 (Burger) and HB 170 (Seitz). HB 170 would prohibit transgender athletes from participating in competitive girl's or women's events in middle schools, high schools, and colleges. HB 183 and HB 337 are similar but would only affect K-12 schools.

These bills would override MSHSAA and higher education institution policies on transgender participation that generally align with NCAA and IOC policy and 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 all three bills.

CORPORATE TAX REPEAL

The Senate-Economic Development and Tax Policy met on January 23 to hear SB 93 (Hoskins). The bill would phase out the corporate income tax. Fully implemented, this bill would reduce state revenues by about \$700 million per year. The Association is concerned that this change will leave the state even less able to meet the funding needs of public education and other vital services in future years and opposes the bill as filed.

TABOR - STATE SPENDING RESTRICTIONS

The Senate Fiscal Oversight Committee heard SJR 7 (Eigel) on January 26. The SJR is a constitutional spending limit similar to the Colorado provision known as “TABOR,” or the so-called “Taxpayer Bill of Rights.” The Association strongly opposes this unneeded restriction. The SJR would impose a permanent, constitutional spending limit on state government and would limit annual growth in state appropriations to a cost-of-living adjustment factor plus a population growth factor. The SJR also mandates automatic, permanent income tax reductions based upon yearly revenue growth conditions.

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