



Legislative Update

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CHARTER SCHOOL FUNDING BILL

The Senate Education Committee heard HCS/HB 1552 (Richey) on March 22. The bill would revise the law specifying payments to charter schools and shift more local school funds to charter schools. The HCS version includes additional changes specific to the St. Louis City district. The House amended the bill to delay the effectiveness on St. Louis City for five years. The Association opposes the bill. Due to floor action continuing overnight, the committee cancelled the scheduled meeting on March 24 to hold an executive session. The committee is likely to vote on HCS/HB 1552 (Richey) at its next meeting.

Missouri NEA believes that charter schools should be sponsored by and accountable to the local community through the elected school board and approved only after the district conducts an impact study on the proposal. School board sponsorship ensures that the board can plan the use of all school funds and implement the services and programs that meet the needs of all students in the community. The Association also 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.

SENATE PASSES CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING MAP

After extended debate on SS/SB 758 (Hough), relating to public projects for facilities, the Senate stood "at ease" through the remainder of the night and came to order in the morning. The Senate laid over SB 758 and took up SS#2/SCS/HB 2117 (Shaul) regarding Congressional redistricting. The Senate eventually adopted a map offered as an amendment by Sen. Koenig. The map is different from the House map but still regarded as a "6-2" map. The Senate approved the bill with an emergency clause. The bill now returns to the House for its consideration of the Senate changes.

SENATE CREATES NEW OFFENSE REGARDING EXPLICIT SEXUAL MATERIALS

The Senate gave first round approval to SS/SB 775 (Rehder) on March 21. The bill creates new rights for sexual assault survivors and contains other provisions regarding sexual offenses.

Sen. Brattin withdrew a controversial amendment to create a new criminal offense that would apply to personnel in public and private K-12 schools who provide "obscene material" to students. That amendment could have applied to some controversial books.

Sen. Brattin offered a different amendment that prohibits providing "explicit sexual material" to students. The new amendment does not apply to texts and resembles the existing offense of providing material to minors that is considered "pornographic for minors". The Senate adopted the amendment.

SENATE DEBATES RESTRICTIONS ON EMPLOYER COVID VACCINE REQUIREMENTS

The Senate debated SS/SB 758 (Hough) for many hours on March 23 but did not bring the bill to a vote. The bill relates to public projects for facilities. The Senate has debated the bill for about nine hours, and most discussion has been on various amendments to restrict or prohibit employers from requiring employees to have COVID vaccines or to discipline or terminate employees who choose not to be vaccinated.

HOLOCAUST EDUCATION

The House perfected HCS/HB 2000 (Schwadron) on March 24. This bill designates the second week in April as "Holocaust Education Week" and requires school districts to adopt a curriculum and provide age appropriate Holocaust education instruction at some point during the school year.

The Senate Progress and Development Committee heard SB 983 (Williams) on March 23. The bill requires the Holocaust Education and Awareness Commission to implement Holocaust education and awareness programs to educate elementary and secondary students about the Holocaust. The bill designates the fourth week in January as "Holocaust Education Week". The week shall include age-appropriate instruction, as determined by each school district.

The Association supports both bills. The Association believes that the historical events of the Holocaust must be taught to provide insight into how atrocities of this magnitude develop. The Association also believes that Holocaust education promotes human rights, prevents future genocides, and reduces doubt that these horrifying events occurred.

SCHOOL RETIREMENT

The House Pensions Committee heard HB 2161 (Dinkins) and HB 2430 (Rusty Black) on March 23. These similar bills would create an increased retirement allowance multiplier of 2.55% for PSRS retirees with 32 or more years of service. The Association supports both bills.

EXTENDED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

The House gave final approval to HB 1856 (Baker) on March 24. The bill would 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.

COMPUTER SCIENCE COURSES

The House gave final approval to HB 2202 (Fitzwater) on March 24. The bill would require district high schools and charter high schools to offer computer science courses or imbedded instruction. The

bill allows high schools the option to comply by informing students and parents of virtual course offerings in computer science.

DRIVER'S EDUCATION COURSES

The Senate Transportation Committee heard SB 1113 (O'Laughlin) on March 22. The bill requires public high schools, including charter high schools, to offer an approved driver's education course, taught by a qualified instructor, to students each school year. The bill creates a state fund to help fund driver education programs. The course is not required to graduate from high school. A student who successfully completes the course shall receive one-half credit as an elective. First-time driver's license applicants must complete an approved driver's education program. The bill contains a six-year sunset clause.

RESTRICTING MEDICAID FUNDING

The Senate Appropriations Committee heard HCS/HJR 117 (Smith) on March 22. The HJR would ask voters for permission for the legislature to not fund Medicaid expansion as approved by Missouri voters in 2020. The Association supports implementation of this important, voter-approved program and opposes the joint resolution.

SUICIDE PREVENTION

The House-Health and Mental Health Policy Committee voted to approve HCS/HB 2136 (Ann Kelley) on March 21. The bill enacts requirements relating to suicide prevention education and information. Districts shall offer two hours of professional development and teachers may participate in the training. The bill also requires student ID cards to have suicide prevention contact information. The Association supports the bill.

COMPETENCY-BASED EDUCATION

The House Workforce Development Committee heard HB 1956 (Richey) on March 21. The bill would establish a competency-based alternative graduation pathway, allow grants to schools to create competency-based education programs, and create the Competency-Based Education Task Force. The Association supports the bill.

INITIATIVE PETITION

The House Elections and Elected Officials Committee scheduled to hear HJR 130 (McDaniel) on March 23, but the committee postponed the hearing. The Association opposes HJR 130. The measure would increase the approval requirement for constitutional amendments, including those brought by initiative petition and by the General Assembly, by requiring both a statewide majority vote and a majority vote in at least half of the state House districts to pass. The Association is concerned that this measure replaces the simple majority requirement with a more complex and difficult threshold. This change could make it significantly more difficult to gain approval of a measure brought by the initiative petition process.

PHOTO ID MANDATE

The Senate Local Government and Elections Committee heard three bills on March 23 that would require registered voters to provide a government-issued photo identification: SB 668 (Burlison), SB 695 (Brattin) and SB 1065 (Hoskins). The Association opposes barriers that keep eligible citizens from voting and being politically active and opposes all three bills.

HOUSE HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The committee heard HB 2670 (Ann Kelley) on March 21. The bill allows students in certain additional vocational certificate programs of study to be eligible for tuition reimbursements under the A+ schools program. The bill would include programs that are vocational but excluded due to length of program, such as certified nurse assistant programs, certified medication technician programs, level 1 medication aide and commercial driver's license programs.

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

In addition to HB 1552 regarding charter school funding, the committee also heard three other bills on March 22:

SB 957 (Bean) Establishes the "Workforce Diploma Program" to assist students in obtaining a high school diploma and in developing employability and career and technical skills.

SB 1051 (Brattin) to 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.

SB 1077 (Eslinger) to revise funding allocations for institutions of higher education by making a part of the allocation based on various student characteristics including annual earnings after graduation. As drafted, the bill would create incentives for institutions to emphasize programs leading to high-paying careers. This change could adversely affect programs leading to lower-paying careers, including teaching, social work and law enforcement.

HOUSE-ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The committee heard four bills on March 22:

HB 1753 (Basye) to allow creation of recovery high schools for students in recovery from substance use issues. The bill allows school districts or groups of districts to apply to DESE for authority to create recovery high schools in regions around the state. The Association supports the bill.

HB 2008 (Schwadron) to establish detailed mandates on publishing every document used or available for use in instruction or training on a district's website and allow lawsuits to enforce compliance. The Association opposes the bill.

HB 2152 (Henderson) to provide for school innovation waivers to exempt schools from specific requirements imposed by statute or regulation. The Association believes this bill could grant flexibility to improve pupil assessments and supports the bill.

HB 2445 (Sassmann) to authorize the Gasconade R-II school district, which crosses county boundaries, to use the county that yields the highest dollar value modifier under the school foundation formula.

The committee also voted to approve eight bills on March 22:

HB 1469 (Pike) to revise the calculation of aid relating to the cost of serving high-needs students. The bill ensures that a district's per pupil average used as a basis for the high-needs funding is not skewed by the high cost of serving those students. The Association supports the bill.

HB 1471 (Pike) to ensure that make up day requirements for half-day preschool programs are proportional to the program's schedule. The Association supports the bill.

HB 2150 (Shields) would enact new provisions governing instruction for vision-impaired students. The bill will increase the fraction of vision-impaired students receiving Braille instruction. The bill requires vision-impaired students to receive assessment and training in use of nonvisual accessible assistive technology and instruction for orientation and mobility. The Association supports the bill.

HCS/HBs 2618 and 2492 (Davidson) and to revise the laws governing adult high schools and expand opportunities for access. This bill allows synchronous instruction connecting students to a live classroom in a Missouri adult high school to be treated the same as in-person learning. The Association supports the bill.

HCS/HB 2575 (West) to establish several new requirements for school board meetings. The bill requires school boards to adopt a policy that provides more options for people to speak to or provide written comments to school boards.

HB 2606 (Pike) to designate the first week of February each year as "School Counseling Week" to recognize the importance of counselors in student success.

HCS/HB 2652 (Haffner) to change procedures for accreditation of public schools and school districts. Reminiscent of the "test and punish" mindset of the federal NCLB act, this bill would mandate that district accreditation be determined largely by scores on state-mandated tests, based on percentages specified in the bill. The Association opposes the bill.

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