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To: Council about Parochiaid
From: Cara Marie Dobie and Ellen Hoekstra
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Re: Legislative Update

EAA Legislation Returns This Session

After legislation to codify the state's Education Achievement Authority stalled in lame duck, the proposal has returned. On March 5th, Rep. Lisa Lyons (R-Alto) introduced HB 4369, which would establish in statute the Education Achievement Authority (EAA). The House Education Committee heard heated testimony on the bill Wednesday afternoon. Rep. Lyons, chair of the committee, stated that the language drafted "addressed concerns of education groups" from last term's legislation.

The EAA was originally created through an interlocal agreement under the Urban Cooperative Act by the Detroit Public Schools (DPS) and Eastern Michigan University in August 2011. The EAA began educating about 10,000 students at 15 schools in Detroit in September of last year. EAA Chancellor John Covington testified at the hearing, saying that the EAA rejects the "one size fits all approach" to education and focuses on providing more classroom resources and more classroom time. Covington told the committee that he couldn't guarantee that the EAA would turnaround education in Michigan but that what the state's been doing in past years when it comes to low-achieving schools is definitely not working.

The bill would expand the EAA to 50 schools performing in the lowest 5 percent for three consecutive years. The schools could get out of the EAA if the school improves performance for four consecutive years or if the superintendent of the district shows the school is attempting to reform itself with a redesign plan. Bill Rustem, the governor's policy director, said the bill is crucial in the future of the state and the "thousands of kids whose futures have been limited because of our society." He said the state will continue to fail these children if the authority without the legislation. Proponents of the legislation presented data from testing they had done, claiming that it demonstrated that students were achieving gains of a year's progress in less than a year. The tests, in fact, appear to have been diagnostic tests rather than achievement tests.

Opponents of expanding the EAA believe that the state should let the EAA operate at its current level longer before giving the model more credence. It was noted in committee by Rep. David Knezek (D-Dearborn Heights) that the EAA has only been operational since September. There

are also comments and questions about the fact that the legislation takes away local control. The bill would eliminate employees' seniority and participation in MPSERS, and collectively bargained contracts would be cancelled for all school employees working within the achievement authority. Rep. Theresa Abed (D-Grand Ledge) said there are too many red flags with the legislation. She also said she thought the bill was being rushed through the legislative process and called in question the ability of "success coaches" to provide the kinds of mental health and social support services many of the students who are failing to make adequate progress need.

The charter school piece is especially of interest to CAP. Under HB 4369, the board of a school district **having any configuration of grades** could authorize charter school; currently only the board of a school district which operates grades K-12 can authorize a charter school. House Bill 4369 also specifies that an achievement authority may not authorize the organization of a public school academy (charter school) unless the charter school is to be located within either of the following: within a school district for which an emergency manager is in place under the Local Financial Stability and Choice Act or within the same school district and within a two-mile radius of a public school that the state school redesign officer ordered to be placed in the state reform district and under the control of the achievement authority.

Chairperson Lyons has announced her intention to move the legislation before the House's spring break. Although the bill is not posted for the House Education Committee scheduled at its regular time on Wednesday, we would not be surprised to see another meeting posted quickly. Member organizations are encouraged to testify and to have their members contact their legislators.

McLellan Report: When will it be issued?

A draft was made public way back in December when it was originally felt the report needed to be done in time for Gov. Rick Snyder's budget on Feb. 7. Not only did that change, but now people are wondering when the so-called McLellan Report on education will be issued. On March 4th, Lansing Attorney Richard McLellan said that the final version of a 300-page suggested redraft of the state's School Aid Act will likely be submitted to the Governor on March 25th.

McLellan has taken criticism for suggesting changes to the K-12 system that have not exactly opened to rave reviews in the state's education community and because of this, he is having second thoughts about being so transparent in the first place and releasing the draft three months ago.

According to *MIRS*, the document has been "polished" in the interim and they are down to "eight to 10 typos" that need fixing up. McLellan said that after receiving the latest version, "very little has changed." Some speculation has linked the legislature's desire to move the EAA legislation very quickly to the "voucher-like" approach expected in the McLellan draft.

Bills of Interest to CAP

House Bill 4032 (Rep. Doug Geiss, D-Taylor) Requires cyber schools post materials on website and submit to Department of Education. Introduced on January 22nd.

Senate Bill 083 (Sen. Dave Robertson, R-Grand Blanc) Provides for conversion schools ("parent trigger" schools) for public school academies. Introduced on January 29th and referred to the Committee on Education.

School Aid Bill: As many CAP members have noted, the 2% "increase" for the K-12 budget is not really an increase and the total school aid bill hits different districts very differently. The Governor's proposed expansion of the Great Start Readiness program has come under fire from legislators of his own party.

Other Items of Interest to CAP

StudentsFirst, an education reform group, announced February 13th that former Rep. Deb Shaughnessy has been named state outreach director. Ms. Shaughnessy, a Republican, served in the House during the 2011-12 term, but lost her re-election bid to now Rep. Theresa Abed (D-Grand Ledge). "