

To: Council About Parochial Board of Directors
From: Cara Marie Dobie and Courtney VanCamp
Date: June 15, 2018
Re: Legislative Report

School Aid Conference Report

The Foundation Allowance that goes to each public school on a per pupil basis was increased overall by \$312 million. Schools will receive increases from \$120 to \$240 per pupil relative to their current per pupil allowance (schools receiving less this year will receive a higher bump for next year).

The conference report also places more strings on struggling schools in two ways. First, “partnership schools” (schools that have failed to meet state benchmarks and were previously placed into the partnership program) will have penalties placed on them if they fail to achieve the partnership plan created when they entered the program. Section 22p of the School Aid budget states that if a school in the partnership program fails to meet the measurable academic outcomes in their partnership agreement within 18 and 36 months after the agreement was signed, the accountability measures will be imposed. Those accountability measures may include school closure or reconstitution. In the final conference report, reconstitution would require significant changes to instruction and non-academic programming, replacement of at least 25% of faculty and staff, and replacement of the principal unless he or she had been in that position for less than 3 years.

Another area of debate surrounded At-Risk funding in Section 31a. The past two school aid budgets have contained language that would apply strings to At-Risk funding if at least 50% of At-Risk students failed to meet proficiency standards in 3rd grade reading and in college preparation. Those strings were to have kicked in for the next school year.

Specifically, the penalty for failing to meet the above standards was that schools in question would be required to spend their At-Risk funding only on programs aimed at improving outcomes in 3rd grade reading and college preparation. Most schools, especially those with a high At-Risk population, currently use those funds for a variety of programs aimed at helping all At-Risk students. This would severely curtail the flexibility these schools would have.

The Governor proposed altering the requirements of the program so that districts would have to meet either the statewide average in 3rd grade reading or college preparation, or see an improvement of at least 10 percentage points in those areas, by the 2020-2021 school year. Moreover, instead of restricting how districts could use At-Risk funds if they failed to meet those standards, it would instead require an evaluation in coordination with the Michigan Department of Education, and the adoption of a school improvement plan based on that evaluation.

The conference report went a different direction from the Governor's recommendation and for the most part maintains the current system with a few tweaks. One change is the addition of an 8th grade mathematics benchmark that would also be considered along with 3rd grade reading and college preparation. The conference report also allows schools meet the standard if they do not show 50% proficiency in these areas provided that they can demonstrate that at least 50% of At-Risk students achieved the equivalent of one year of growth in these areas. Lastly, the conference report postpones implementation of the "penalties" for failure to meet the standards by one year, to the 2019-2020 school year.

Whitmer: Education Plan Will Focus On Students, Teachers

Democratic Gubernatorial candidate Gretchen Whitmer announced the education plan she hopes to implement if elected entitled "Get It Done: Better Schools Now for Michigan Students".

Her plan would triple the number of literacy coaches in Michigan, increase the number of social workers, career counselors, and nurses in schools; adopt alternatives to testing in order to better evaluate students, increase teachers' wages, improve teacher certification programs, ban guns in schools, and provide universal, full-day pre-school. Her plan would also enforce conflict of interest laws so that decisions are made with the best interest of students in mind.

Whitmer claims that her plan would not only improve Michigan schools, but Michigan's economy as well.

As for funding, Whitmer plans to move Michigan over to a weighted-foundation allowance which she believes would better address each student's needs, specifically students in special education, students from low-income families, and students learning English. Whitmer explains that she does not plan to change Proposal A, but will instead ensure that funds from the School Aid Fund will not be removed to fill gaps in the General Fund. Whitmer also wants to review Michigan's state tax policy so that there are sufficient resources directed towards education.

Whitmer also explained that she is in favor of investing more in public schools rather than shutting them down if they fail.

Unlike her Democrat opponents Shri Thanedar and Abdul El-Sayed, Whitmer did not mention banning for-profit charter companies, but she does plan to hold both charter and public schools accountable for meeting the same standards.

Both the Michigan Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers praised Whitmer's program.

Senate Panel Reports Career Teacher Bills

The Economic Development and International Investment Committee reported a bill package on Thursday consisting of HB 5139, HB 5141, HB 5142, and HB 5145 to address career and technical education.

Senator Rebekah Warren (D-Ann Arbor) voted against the entire package whereas the two other Democrats on the committee voted against only HB 5141 and HB 5142, with the Republican members voting in favor of all four.

House Bill 5139 would require the Department of Education and Department of Talent and Economic Development to create a career development model that could be taught in schools.

House Bill 5141 allows for schools to hire non-endorsed, uncertified teachers who have met specific requirements to fill career, technical, and industrial technology education positions.

House Bill 5142 modifies a school aid provision so that aid cannot be revoked when a school hires uncertified teachers for technical education positions.

House Bill 5145 asks the state to allow the time individuals spend working with local companies to count towards their continued education requirement for administrative and teaching certificates.

University Budget Sees 2% Increase, Whodunit on Who Killed 3%

The final version of SB 857 includes a 2% increase for university operations but lacks an additional 1% increase that would have funded campus sexual assault prevention, mental health programs, and overall campus safety. Although House leadership was blamed for the axing of the 1% increase, Speaker Leonard denied the claims, drawing confusion on why the increase was cut.

Despite the bill's lack of a budget increase towards sexual assault prevention, it does include new requirements regarding Title IX reporting such as a 10% decrease in funding for universities that fail to submit their Title IX report to the State Budget Office and higher education subcommittees. Due to Michigan State University's gross mishandling of Title IX complaints against Larry Nassar, the bill also bars universities from using medical experts who may have a conflict of interest to conduct Title IX investigations as well as requires the use of third parties in the university's review of its Title IX office. Additionally, the bill decreases funding for universities that exceed 3.8% tuition increase for the upcoming school year and increases both the State Competitive Scholarships and Tuition Incentive Program by \$6 million each.

The budget moves \$234.5 million from the School Aid Fund to higher education, increasing the School Aid Fund for higher education to \$500.2 million. Higher education now receives one third of its funding from the School Aid Fund, drawing debate over whether or not this fund was meant only for K-12 schools.

The budget contains \$1.63 billion, \$1.046 billion General Fund.

Conference Provides Increase for Community Colleges

State community colleges will receive an additional \$3.2 million in operating funds after a unanimously signed report on Tuesday. This budget will be a 2.2% increase, eliminating the \$1.04 million General Fund so that all state spending will be moved to the School Aid Fund.

In addition to the budget increase, the agreement requires community colleges to provide the state with a student sexual misconduct report to certify that they comply with campus safety standards.