

Legislative Update is a publication of the South Carolina School Boards Association



Friday, March 1, 2019

- Education reform bill heads to the full House next week
- Senate subcommittee to begin meeting tour on education reform bill
- House to take up budget during 2DAC

House committee advances education reform bill to the floor

The House Education and Public Works Committee voted 15-to-1 Wednesday to report out favorably a bill to enact the South Carolina Career Opportunity and Access for All Act ([H.3759](#)). The legislation now heads to the full House where it will likely be taken up, get approved and sent to the Senate by the end of the week of March 4. After adopting the amendment approved by the subcommittee the week prior, the committee took up 13 more amendments but only adopted three. Highlights of the newly adopted amendments are as follows:

- Amends language regarding students attending schools outside of their attendance zone to include charter schools, magnet schools and schools for students with disabilities that participate in Exceptional SC.
- Reinserts that a reading/literacy coach will be employed in each elementary school and adds roles and responsibilities of the coaches.
- Clarifies that any test in an English/language arts and mathematics course may be used to measure a student's reading ability and mathematical understanding using Lexile and Quantile scales.
- Specifies that the career pathways system must be developed before August 1, 2022.
- Directs districts to coordinate with other school districts to ensure that students have increased access to multiple career pathways and directs the S.C. Department of Education (SCDE) to utilize state funds to initiate and foster cross district programs.
- Reinserts the annual Education Finance Act (EFA) inflation factor language regarding the Base Student Cost (BSC) and the statewide minimum salary schedule.
- Specifies that an educator's base salary is to include the National Board Supplement.
- Adds a new section that authorizes local boards to adopt policies allowing teachers to enroll their children in the schools where they teach if space is available.
- Deletes language prohibiting school board members from discussing executive session matters and adds language to allow school boards to adopt a policy that prohibits board members from discussing certain matters allowed by law.
- Amends language regarding consolidation of school districts with 1,000 or less students to include the requirement that more than 50 percent of students attend schools rated as

below average or unsatisfactory.

- Adds independent higher education institutions as entities that are included in the creation of a uniform system of dual enrollment.

Finally, amendments that were offered but voted down include eliminating the Zero to 20 Committee, eliminating non-profit education management organizations from managing schools taken over by the state superintendent for low performance, lowering student-teacher ratios in low performing schools, extending the years districts can be rated unsatisfactory before a takeover is implemented and requiring schools to provide 30 minutes of free time a day for teachers.

Senate subcommittee considers new amendment

The Senate Subcommittee taking up the companion bill ([S.419](#)) to the House education reform bill heard testimony Wednesday regarding the Read to Succeed sections in the bill. Prior to hearing testimony, the subcommittee discussed but carried over a proposed amendment to sections that the subcommittee had taken up the week prior. These sections included the state goal for workforce readiness, a student bill of rights, adding a student to serve as a non-voting member on the State Board of Education (SBE), the creation of a Zero to 20 Committee, requiring computer science courses, reducing state standardized tests and requiring early childhood literacy reports.

Some of the changes in the proposed amendment to these sections include the following:

- Deletes the Student Bill of Rights.
- Deletes the Zero to 20 Committee but directs the state superintendent, SBE and the Education and Economic Development Act Coordinating Council to annually provide a comprehensive report that specifically identifies key benchmarks within the 0-20 education and workforce pipeline for measuring progress, provide recommendations to improve state and local efforts and recommend legislation it considers necessary.
- Deletes the computer science courses section.
- Delete standardized tests not required by the federal government for accountability purposes.

Other action in the House

The House Labor Commerce and Industry (LCI) Committee on Thursday amended and voted unanimously to give a favorable report and send to the full House a bill to enact the South Carolina Lactation Support Act ([H.3200](#)). The bill would require employers - those that employ one or more employees, including the State and its political subdivisions - to make reasonable efforts to provide workers with reasonable break time and space to express milk at work. Employers are to provide an employee with reasonable unpaid break time or permit an employee to use paid break time or meal time each day to express breast milk. The employer is to make reasonable efforts to provide a room or other location, other than a toilet stall, in close proximity to the work area, where an employee may express milk in privacy.

Other actions in the Senate

The Senate K12 Finance Subcommittee met Wednesday to begin its budget process by hearing from State Superintendent Molly Spearman who presented the SCDE budget request.

Highlights of the SCDE budget request include:

- \$50 million for an incentive fund to be used for consolidating school districts with low student enrollment.
- \$218 million to increase the BSC by \$162 per student, which would bring the total BSC to \$2,647 per student.

- \$154 million from Education Improvement Act funding to provide a 5 percent teacher pay raise.
- \$42 million for school bus purchase/lease - \$24 million of which could come from the Volkswagen settlement funds.
- \$3 million for hazardous bus transportation routes.
- \$1.5 million for professional development on the computer science standards
- \$2.45 million for industry certifications and credentials.
- \$60 million for instructional materials.
- \$5.2 million to add 19 positions to the VirtualSC program.

The Senate Medical Affairs Subcommittee on Thursday gave a favorable report to a House-passed joint resolution to create a Mold Abatement and Remediation Study Committee ([H.3127](#)).

The committee is directed to study the health effects of mold in public areas, to include the impacts on public health with a focus on children in public schools and to ascertain the best method of abatement for the mold. The committee, which will be composed of three Senate appointees and three House appointees, is to issue a report by December 31, 2019.