

LegislativeUpdate

Michigan Association of Superintendents & Administrators | August 30, 2019



Summary

This week in Lansing we didn't see any substantive action on the budget but a lot of back and forth in press releases and tweets from the Governor's Office and the House and Senate communications teams. After several weeks of Pro-forma session, the Legislature convened to consider legislation and take action on some issues. The Senate passed a "shell bill" for the budget through the Senate Appropriations Committee and then the full Senate the same day. SB 154 operates as a shell bill because it contains no real information and leaves budget numbers blank. This tactic is used to have some sort of legislative vehicle available for lawmakers to amend at a later time to avoid the so-called five-day rule. The five-day rule states that in Michigan, no bill can become law at any regular session of the legislature until it has been printed and reproduced and in the possession of each house for at least five days (Constitution, Art. IV, Sec. 26.) The technical requirements of the five-day rule are satisfied with shell bills, even though they may dramatically change in between readings.

Republican leadership appears to be coalescing around sending a budget to Gov. Whitmer separate from a roads deal—a move she has promised to veto—to avoid a government shutdown. There has also been discussion of a continuation budget that would authorize spending at the current year levels for the month of October or longer. Neither situation would be good for schools as our costs have risen and many districts have budgeted for at least modest increases in spending.

Data from the Michigan School Business Officials (MSBO) demonstrates this point very clearly. The data indicate that if a continuation budget is passed 44 percent of school districts would increase class sizes, 67 percent would decrease educational supply budgets, 25 percent would lay off staff, 60 percent would defer needed maintenance and 89 percent would be unable to make the changes needed to bring their budgets into balance. Additionally, MSBO reported that nearly 1/3 of districts report that they would require an additional cash flow borrowing to cover payroll and operational expenses if a continuation budget were to be in place for 90 days or longer.

Needless to say, the school community is now holding its breath waiting for a solution that involves real increases in revenue and structural changes to the way we fund the classroom, universities, and community colleges.

We plan to send out an alert with more specific talking points related to the budget, but in the meantime, communicate with lawmakers that a solution must involve new revenue for schools (hold-harmless is not enough and is, in fact, a false promise), a structural change that includes the tenets of the SFRC weighted foundation, and changes to the school aid shell game related to university and community college operating budgets.

Finally, if you want to receive real-time updates from our Government Relations team at the Capitol, join our [Rapid Response Network for superintendents](#). By submitting your information, you receive text-message-alerts and updates on the action as it happens.