

LegislativeUpdate

Michigan Association of School Administrators | March 2, 2018



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Summary

School safety is an issue that's on the minds of every educator in our state, and it's something we are thinking about at MASA. Similarly, over the last two

weeks, our lawmakers in Lansing have begun to have the conversation about how we tackle this politically charged issue. Your association has partnered with other organizations to help give you answers and guidance and to that end hosted a Webinar on Thursday on School Threats and Student Protests with Thrun Law Firm. In case you missed it, we will be rebroadcasting that webinar next week and you can find more information [here](#).

Additionally MASA is hosting a one-day Drive-In conference to further discuss this issue. You can find more details and register [here](#). While no legislative solution will undo the past, we are working with lawmakers and our stakeholders to develop a proposal to address school safety in a meaningful way.

As always, please contact [MASA](#) with any questions or concerns.

House Discusses Teacher Preparation Program/ Reports Letter Grade Bill

Yesterday the House Education Reform Committee reported out the A–F school accountability bill to the House Floor. As previously shared in our updates, HB 5526 sponsored by the committee chair, Rep. Tim Kelly (R-Saginaw Twp.), creates an A-F accountability system to grade schools. The bill was revised with several changes.

Most significantly the bill now repeals Sec. 1280c, the so-called Failing Schools legislation which created the School Reform Office. Instead, a 13 member commission created by the bill will develop and implement all of the SRO responsibilities. The bill requires the commission to develop a new accountability system by September 1st and the first scores for schools would be released on September 1, 2019. The commission would also have the responsibility of identifying the lowest-achieving schools.

The commission would be created by July 1st of this year and will be housed in the

Michigan Department of Education (MDE). It includes the state superintendent, 7 members appointed by the governor, 1 appointed by the Senate Majority Leader, 1 appointed by the Speaker of the House and 3 members appointed by the state superintendent. All members would serve 4-year terms.

MASA is opposed to this legislation. Speaker Leonard (R-DeWitt), who has previously opposed this concept, has not yet signaled his intention with this version of the bill.

The committee also heard introductory testimony on a package of bills aimed at changing Michigan's teacher preparation programs. We shared details on the bills in last week's update and they continue to evolve in content. All eight bills are sponsored by Republican members of the committee and are likely to be reported out of committee with ease. The bills were amended yesterday to require elementary level teachers to have 12 credits in the teaching of reading, mandatory criminal background checks for all those enrolled in a teacher preparation program, and clarification that both a rural and urban experience must be included. We are likely to hear additional testimony on this package from stakeholder groups including universities in the coming weeks. MASA will keep you updated with the latest.

Budget Updates

We have begun our budget meetings with leaders in both chambers of the Legislature. Both the House and Senate have assigned the budgets to designated subcommittees to hold a series of hearings. This includes a budget overview by the Governor's staff and appropriate House and Senate Fiscal agency analysts. This is a necessary phase in the budget consideration process as the committee is able to hear explanations on specific line items, changes from the previous year's budget, and from stakeholder groups when considering a complete budget.

This week the House and Senate K-12 School Aid and Education Subcommittee both

heard about a number of the programs that the Governor proposed to either eliminate or significantly reduce. The majority of the testimony was regarding shared time programming for which Gov. Snyder proposed a cap of 5 percent of student enrollment per district. Proponents of these programs argued that limiting enrollment will significantly affect currently enrolled students. We are likely to see continued testimony on this topic in the coming weeks as both committees will allow several stakeholders an opportunity to speak to their programs before a final decision is made.

The committee also heard from cyber charter school advocates who addressed the proposed reduction in the foundation allowance proposed by the governor. Stakeholders argued that although they may not have transportation costs, their programs have increased costs regarding testing and technology without any local revenues. In the House, members countered with tough questions on this argument stating that unlike traditional schools, they do not see a breakdown of specific costs for these groups.

We expect each subcommittee to report their respective version of the budget the week of March 19, 2018.

Truancy Bills See First Hearing in House

This week, the House Judiciary Committee took testimony on SBs 103-106. These bills aim to address the issue of chronic absenteeism and truancy. MASA is mostly supportive of the concept but has some reservations about the fine points. We've been working with the bill sponsors, other stakeholder groups, and Rep. Jim Runestad's (R-White Lake) office to address our concerns.

We will be providing testimony next week and will hopefully be able to offer several amendments to the package. Our concern rests with four main issues:

1. The definition of “in attendance” currently requires a student to be present for 90% of the day to be considered in attendance. This is a very narrow definition and we believe does not account for the reality of varied attendance systems and scheduled setups across elementary and secondary buildings.
2. Under the bills, the accrual of tardies can result in unexcused absences, and we believe that this is overly prescriptive from the state and should be left to the local district and building level policies to handle tardies.
3. The bill requires that a doctor’s note is provided for any medically excused absence beyond the fifth excused absence. The requirement from the state for a doctor’s note places an unnecessary burden on families with multiple children or for whom regular medical care is not available, and dives too deeply into the weeds on how attendance would be accounted for at the local level.
4. Currently, the bill includes an overly prescriptive and inclusive list of reasons for an excused absence. We believe that the district/building should be able to set policy on what is and what is not a reasonable excuse.

We are very appreciative of all sides for their willingness to work through policy differences and look forward to a bit more work to get this policy right.