

UP

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MSEA LEGISLATIVE UPDATES



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THE WEEK THAT WAS IN ANNAPOLIS

- **Governor Hogan's Sneak Attack**

Unable to pass his ill-conceived and highly controversial voucher scheme through a legitimate legislative process, Governor Larry Hogan issued a supplemental budget on Thursday that sneaks a revised version of the BOAST private school initiative into budget deliberations. This plan is far from the BOAST bill that has been rejected over the last nine year – in fact, it is worse. The governor proposes a business grant program, where a corporate entity can make a tax deductible contribution to a charitable organization, set up as a student assistance organization (SAO), and receive a 50% rebate in the form of state dollars. The SAO then uses the full contribution to fund vouchers for qualifying education expenses to private school students. This grant program focuses exclusively on private school students, where the governor's bill allowed SAOs to support either private or public school students. And despite the governor's bill having limited support and this program being hastily thrown together at the last minute, it is immediately an issue to consider during budget talks for the five delegates and five senators who make up the budget conferees.

The 10 budget conferees for HB 70, the State Budget, are: Delegates McIntosh (D, Baltimore City), Jones (D, Baltimore County), Gaines (D, Prince George's), Kaiser (D, Montgomery) and Zucker (D, Montgomery); and Senators Kasemeyer (D, Howard/Baltimore Counties), Madaleno (D, Montgomery); DeGrange (D, Anne Arundel), King (D, Montgomery), and Edwards (R, Garrett/Allegany/Washington). The conferees will settle all differences in the budgets passed by their respective chambers, reconcile the portions of the governor's supplemental budget that they choose to accept, and deliver a conference committee report that cannot be amended and can only be voted up or down in each chamber. The conferees are determinative in the outcome of these critical policy and budget issues.

MSEA calls on the budget conferees to resist the governor's corporate welfare scheme in his supplemental budget, and, instead, focus on the narrow group of issues that can be addressed to reach a positive budget resolution. [Click here to email the budget conferees.](#)

- **Senate Poised to Pass Charter School Bill**

After several weeks of debate and negotiations, the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee reported [SB 595](#), the Public Charter School Improvement Act of 2015, to the full Senate. The upper chamber started debate on the bill Thursday and will continue today. Assuming no dangerous floor amendments are added during second reader debate, and based on the 10-1 committee vote, the bill is expected to pass.

The Senate stripped the most counterproductive and extreme elements of the governor's bill and effectively threaded the needle of providing some expanded flexibility to eligible charter schools that need to demonstrate a history of sound fiscal management, student achievement, and longevity. None of the expanded flexibility provisions can usurp collective bargaining agreements or language. And while the Senate agreed to some of the weighted lottery provisions the governor proposed, they narrowed those targeting tools to reduce the likelihood of charter schools simply "skimming" the most capable and highest performing students.

MSEA will continue to work with the Ways and Means Committee in the House and all interested parties in efforts to further improve the bill and our charter school law. We will focus on quality, accountability, and equity in pursuit of a final bill that supports charters without hurting traditional public schools, students, and educators.

- **House Version of the Capital Budget Includes More Funding for School Construction**

The House of Delegates voted 129-10 to adopt [HB 71](#), the FY16 Capital Budget. The capital budget funds building, construction, planning, renovation, replacement, and capital equipment for state facilities such as parks, hospitals, higher education institutions, and of course, schools. The capital budget is the state's best job creation tool, and is estimated to create and maintain 27,000 direct and indirect jobs and another 16,000 jobs from the \$1.6 billion of local and private funds leveraged by the state's capital program spending. This budget provides \$300 million to build schools and modernize classrooms. \$20 million of this total is based on legislation that targets school construction funds to the five school districts struggling to keep up with significant enrollment growth and reduce the reliance on portable classrooms. The Senate takes up the capital budget next week.

- **Testing Commission Bill Almost to the Finish Line**

The House amended [SB 497](#) to conform with the changes they made last week to [HB 452](#), Commission to Review Maryland's Use of Assessments and Testing. The Senate version of the commission bill will hopefully achieve final passage in the House today and then move back to the Senate for concurrence. The Senate has not yet moved the House version of the same bill, and while we are running short on days left in the session, there should be plenty of time to move legislation that has received unanimous votes at every step along the way to passage. If successful, the commission will collect data on the usefulness, purpose, cost, and redundancy of state and local tests, as well as provide a more complete look at crowded testing windows and insufficient resources. The commission will review all of this data, as will stakeholders, including MSEA, to make recommendations and inform legislative and administrative efforts starting next year. [Email your legislators today](#) about the importance of having a substantive, detailed conversation about examining and reducing the amount of testing in our schools.

- **News and Notes**

- *U.S. Senate Expected to Move Swiftly on ESEA Reauthorization Later This Month*

As early as April 14, the Senate HELP Committee is expected to begin its markup of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act reauthorization. Committee Chairman Lamar Alexander (R, Tennessee) and Ranking Member Patty Murray (D, Washington) plan to move a bipartisan bill towards consideration by the full Senate by the end of the month or early May. MSEA has been working with NEA to target messages and contacts to Senators Mikulski and Cardin and demand that a final bill provide more opportunity for all students, as well as providing more time and support for students to learn and teachers to teach.

To learn more about the actions in Congress so far and to make sure your voice is heard before it's too late, visit www.getESEARight.com.

- *Senator Cardin Takes Over as Ranking Member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee*

Maryland's junior U.S. Senator Ben Cardin is expected to be named the top-ranking Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. The spot opened up following the indictment of New Jersey Senator Robert Menendez, but must be ratified by the Democratic Caucus before it is finalized.

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