

# UP

# the STREET

MSEA LEGISLATIVE UPDATES



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Issue 103

## THE WEEK THAT WAS IN ANNAPOLIS

### • **Less Testing, More Learning**

Democrats in the House and Senate announced this week that they plan to push a legislative agenda this session to target over-testing. The [announcement](#) demonstrates the success of the efforts of educators to prioritize the issue and demand action. Legislators are listening, but must continue to hear from you so they take bold action to help reduce the overall time spent on mandated testing.

The first of many testing-related bills was introduced in the House of Delegates this week. [Delegate Eric Luedtke](#) (D, District 14, Montgomery County) introduced [HB 141](#), Education Accountability Program - Limits on Testing. In short, this legislation establishes a cap of no more than 2% of instruction time that would be allowed for students to spend taking mandated federal, state, or local tests. Time associated for teacher-developed tests and quizzes are exempt from this cap, as are tests required under federal law for English language learners or students with special needs with a 504 plan. The bill hearing has not been scheduled yet, but once it is, it will be in front of the [Ways and Means Committee](#), as will all pieces of our Less Testing agenda.

This is an exciting time and an opportunity for education advocates to contact their senator and delegates to support HB 141 and other pending legislation to target over-testing, including:

- Creating transparency in testing through regular reporting to parents about mandated standardized tests.
- Ensuring that the PARCC test cannot be used in teacher and principal evaluations, which only encourages heightened focus and pressure on standardized testing performance.
- Reducing the months-long disruption caused by the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment by changing it to a sampling test rather than a test given to every student.
- Applying to the federal government to seek innovation in testing so districts can experiment with performance-based assessments rather than PARCC.

[Send an email today by clicking here](#) and writing your own message to your senator and delegates. Ask for their help to reduce time on testing so students have more time to learn and educators have more time to teach.

### • **First Look at Governor Hogan's FY17 Budget**

On Wednesday, Governor Hogan's budget secretary unveiled the Administration's FY17 budget ([SB 190](#)), totaling \$42.3 billion in state and federal funding. Last year, Hogan's initial budget offering included nearly \$150 million in cuts to public schools. Ultimately, the General Assembly restored most of that funding. Unfortunately, Governor Hogan continues to withhold \$68 million in geographic cost of education index (GCEI) funding. In response to the governor's unwillingness to view GCEI as part of the state funding formula, the General Assembly passed legislation in 2015 requiring the index funds to be included in future school funding mandates.

The budget actions from a year ago protect education funding in the FY17 budget. In funding current Thornton formulas and GCEI, Governor Hogan is following the law. State aid for education increases to \$6.3 billion (including teacher retirement funding). [Click here for the county breakdown of the FY17 state aid for public schools allocations.](#)

Driven by record student enrollment, a slight inflation increase, and funding GCEI, the budget adds \$140 million to FY16 levels. Last month, early projections had full funding adding over \$180 million. The difference is found in the governor's funding level of compensatory aid, a piece of the formula that provides additional financial support services to students who are struggling to meet standards because of economical or educational disadvantages. Originally projected to grow by \$52 million, the budget only adds \$4 million in compensatory aid. Budget briefings in the coming weeks will hopefully identify why this discrepancy exists.

Here are some quick highlights of the overall budget:

- State aid for education increases \$140 million above FY16 funding levels.
- \$310 million for the state's public school construction program (Capital budget, [SB 191](#)).
- Full funding of the actuarial required pension contribution, plus \$150 million supplemental contribution.
- \$429.3 million in funds for school lunch and breakfast programs, an increase of \$74.4 million.
- \$2 million and 20 positions to enhance services in the Juvenile Services Education Program.
- \$704,000 over two years to launch the development of four P-TECH schools.
- There is no companion Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act this year.

There are some lowlights and points of concern in the education part of the budget too:

- Continuing the \$6 million in public funding to purchase textbooks and technology for non-public schools.
- \$5 million to launch a version of the BOAST voucher program. This budget proposal creates a new grant program to reimburse business entities for 50% of the amount they contribute to a student assistance organization to provide financial assistance to students attending non-public schools.
- \$5.6 million targeting only some schools with declining enrollment. The budget identifies specific funding for Carroll, Garrett, and Kent County schools, yet they are not the only ones losing students. In fact, Baltimore City's declining enrollment is a leading reason why the city schools are receiving \$24 million less in state aid compared to last year.
- \$3.5 million in school construction funds for non-public schools.

We will certainly be learning more as we dig through the budget, participate in briefings, and ask more questions. Additional budget updates will be shared in future issues of *Up the Street*.

## • News and Notes

- *Zucker for District 14 Senate Seat*  
Senator Karen Montgomery (D, District 14, Montgomery County) announced her retirement at the start of the year, creating a vacancy in the State Senate. Following the recommendation of MSEA and other leading progressive organizations, the Montgomery County Democratic Central Committee tapped [Delegate Craig Zucker](#) for the Senate appointment to fill the vacancy. Zucker is expected to be formally appointed by Governor Hogan next week and will immediately take his seat in the Senate.
- *2016 Legislative Priorities*  
Each year, MSEA develops targeted legislative priorities that serve as our lead issues for that session. Please review and share our [2016 Legislative Priorities](#) with colleagues, advocates, and legislators and help us achieve our goals around school funding, less testing, and narrowing opportunity gaps for students.

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