

CCSBLC February 2024 Meeting
February 28, 2024
Virtual Meeting

Attendees:

Bill Wood (Chairperson, Avon Grove), Holly Charest (Coatesville), Caryn Gharyeb (Downingtown), Samantha Jouin (Great Valley), Ethan Cramer (Kennett Consolidated), Dr. Nick Rotoli (Owen J. Roberts), Jennifer Kehs (Oxford), Dan Wiser (Phoenixville), Maryann Piccioni (Tredyffrin/Easttown), Jody Allen (Unionville-Chadds Ford), Alex Christy (West Chester), George Fiore (CCIU), Christa Fazio (CCIU), Melissa Smith (CCIU)

- I. Chairperson Bill Wood opened the meeting at 6:33 p.m.
- II. Christa Fazio, CCIU Director of Communications, Marketing & Engagement, provided a preview of the Legislative Breakfast.
 - a. Scheduled for Friday, March 1 beginning at 8:30 a.m. in the cafeteria of TCHS Brandywine.
 - b. Confirmed Legislators and Staff
 - i. Representative Paul Friel
 - ii. Representative John Lawrence
 - iii. Representative Chris Pielli
 - iv. Representative Christina Sappey
 - v. Representative Melissa Shusterman
 - vi. Representative Dan Williams
 - vii. Senator Carolyn Comitta
 - viii. Senator John Kane
 - ix. Senator Katie Muth
 - x. Office of Rep. Friel - Laura Johnson
 - xi. Office of Rep. Otten - Beth Brindle
 - xii. Office of Sen. Comitta - Ethan Shaffer
 - xiii. Office of Sen. Comitta - Michael Hartman
 - xiv. Office of U.S. Sen. Casey - Ethan Seletsky
 - xv. Office of Rep. C. Williams – Traci Plunkett
 - c. Breakfast Agenda
 - i. 8:30 – 9:00- Breakfast
 - ii. 8:45 – 9:00- Welcome from Bill Wood
 - iii. 9:00- Introduction of Dr. Sherri Smith by Dr. George Fiore
 - iv. 9:00 – 9:30- Dr. Sherri Smith, PASA Executive Director
 - v. 9:30 – 10:00- Tabletop
 - vi. 10:00 – 10:30- Panel Discussion
 - vii. 10:30- Closing, Christa Fazio
 - d. Tabletop Discussions (Superintendents have seen these and will work with the table to determine which of the following topics may be most relevant for your district to discuss.)

- i. **Equity in Education Funding:** Discuss the Basic Education Funding (BEF) Commission report aimed at addressing disparities in education funding across school districts in Pennsylvania. How might this impact resource allocation and student outcomes? What programs and services will your district be able to provide for students with the additional funds outlined in the BEF Commission report?
 - ii. **Charter School Accountability:** Explore the implications of the proposed Cyber Charter Funding reform and the financial impact for each district. How can Pennsylvania ensure equity and accountability for quality public education while maintaining choice and innovation?
 - iii. **Mental Health Support in Schools:** Discuss the importance of mental health support services in schools and analyze legislation's effectiveness in improving access to these services. What additional measures are needed to address students' mental health needs adequately?
 - iv. **School Safety Measures:** Consider the recent bills related to enhancing school safety measures. What balance should be struck between creating a secure environment and maintaining a nurturing educational atmosphere?
 - v. **Special Education Services:** Explore special education funding in Pennsylvania. How can the state ensure that students with disabilities receive the support they need to thrive academically and socially?
 - vi. **Dual County Taxation:** Districts that span two counties encounter a significant discrepancy in the tax burden carried by residents in each county. Explore the impact this discrepancy poses for school districts and the possible solutions for a more equitable tax formula.
- e. Panel Discussion (8 out of 9 Legislators will be participating; Senator Kane does need to leave for another commitment after the tabletop discussion.)
- i. Staffing shortages in education have become a critical issue affecting schools across our community, impacting the quality of education and student achievement. These shortages span a range of positions, from teachers to support staff, and are influenced by various factors including competitive salaries, workplace conditions, and professional support. **What are the main factors contributing to staff shortages in our schools, and how can state legislation support recruitment and retention?** (certifications, pay, mental health, community partnerships)
 - ii. As school leaders and local legislators, we share a common goal of ensuring that our students receive a quality education that prepares them for future success. However, we also face the challenge of managing significant expenses within the school district budget, some of which may be alleviated through legislative action or shared responsibility. **Discuss any immediate areas where legislative action could provide relief or support.** (charter reform, unfunded mandates, infrastructure, transportation)
 - iii. The intertwining relationship between mental health and education cannot be overstated. As we observe a rising trend in mental health concerns among students, it becomes imperative to address how these challenges affect not

only their academic performance but their overall wellbeing and future prospects. **We invite you to discuss the impact of mental health challenges within our educational system and explore legislative measures that can provide meaningful support.** (mental health, unfunded mandates, local control)

- iv. In our pursuit of educational excellence, it is essential to recognize and address the diverse needs of all learners within our schools. From students with disabilities to gifted learners, and from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds to those with linguistic diversity, our educational system must be equipped to offer personalized and effective learning experiences. **In what ways can we work collaboratively to support innovative teaching methods, equitable resource distribution and creation of an inclusive school culture?** (special ed, increased student needs, equitable funding, staffing)
- v. *Recommendation from the CCSBLC: Consider establishing some understanding at the beginning that not every Legislator needs to speak on every panel topic if they are not adding something new to the discussion.

III. Ms. Fazio provided an overview of the Governor's budget proposal that was shared during the February 6 joint session.

- a. \$48.3B total budget proposed (\$3.8B increase, +8%)
 - i. BEF: \$1.1B total
 - 1. \$872M as first-year adequacy investment
 - 2. \$200M to be distributed through BEF Formula
 - ii. Special Education: increase by \$50 million
 - iii. Career and Technical Education and Dual Enrollment:
 - 1. \$2.4M increase to CTE
 - 2. Continue \$7M in support of dual enrollment
 - iv. Establishment of statewide cyber tuition rate: \$8,000
 - v. School Safety and Security Grants:
 - 1. Continues \$50M annual investment in school safety and security improvements
 - 2. Provides \$300M in sustainable funding for environmental repair projects in schools
 - vi. Mental Health: \$100M
 - vii. Educator Talent Recruitment: \$10M for the Educator Talent Recruitment Account
 - viii. Student Teacher Stipends: \$15M
- b. Cyber Charter Reform: Governor Shapiro proposes:
 - i. Statewide tuition rate: \$8,000/student
 - 1. Better alignment with actual costs
 - 2. School district savings: \$262M annually
- c. Key Line Items
 - i. BEF: \$8,944,444,000 (+13.62%)
 - ii. Special Education: \$1.436,815,000 (+3.61%)

- iii. Early Intervention: \$373,895,000 (+4.76%)
 - iv. Pre-K Counts: \$334,762,000 (+10.74%)
 - v. Head Start Supplemental: \$90,878,000 (+3.06%)
 - vi. Non-Public Schools: \$98,969,000 (0%)
 - vii. Career & Technical Education: \$121,521,000 (+2%)
 - viii. School Based Mental Health Grants: \$100,000,000 (0%)
 - ix. School Safety Grants: \$50,000,000 (0%)
 - x. Adult & Family Literacy: \$17,310,000 (+6.13%)
 - xi. Non-Public & Charter Transportation: \$73,396,000 (1.58%)
 - xii. Youth Development Centers: \$13,748,000 (+22.42%)
- d. Budget Considerations:
- i. Increased spending, no tax increase
 - 1. Would use \$3B of \$14B in reserve funding
 - ii. Split General Assembly
 - iii. Election Year – all House, Half of Senate
 - iv. Potential education sticking points
 - 1. Cyber charter reform
 - 2. Vouchers? No mention of it in the Governor’s budget.
- IV. Ms. Fazio provided a legislative update as follows:
- a. Update on the February 13 special election to fill the House vacancy left by Representative John Galloway who won the election for Magistrate Judge.
 - i. Democrats retained the seat on February 13 with the election of Jim Prokopiak, a school board member in Bucks County.
 - ii. Democrats now hold a 102-100 majority with an additional vacancy recently left by the resignation of Republican Joe Adams.
 - b. Legislation of interest:
 - i. [SB1057](#): Educational Freedom Act
 - 1. Establishes new “Lifeline Scholarship” program to students in lowest-achieving public schools (15%) who meet low-income requirements (250% above federal poverty line); Eligible to receive annual scholarship
 - 2. \$300M in new funding stream
 - 3. “Would not take any money from public schools” – Co-sponsorship memo
 - ii. Mental Health Related Bills
 - 1. [HB1553](#): Voted out of the House Education Committee (1-18-24): This bill requires schools to include the suicide prevention hotline telephone number on student identification cards for students in grades 6-12; and, in school safety and security, further providing for school safety and security coordinator. The suicide prevention hotline telephone number provided on the student identification card must be a telephone number that can be accessed for use twenty-four (24) hours a day and seven (7) days a week by a student or other individual. The board of school directors of a school district shall work

with the school safety and security coordinator under section 1309-B to implement the requirements of this section.

2. [HB1519](#): Voted out of the House Education Committee (1-18-24): This legislation would allow students to take three excused absences for mental health reasons without requiring a doctor's note. Providing mental health days would encourage students to take care of their mental health as they would their physical health. This bill would align Pennsylvania
3. [HB1665](#): Voted out of the House Education Committee (1-18-24): This legislation would create the School Counseling Services Act, which would require that schools develop a robust and comprehensive school counseling plan. The plan would ensure that academic, career planning, and social and emotional learning concerns are addressed, would include a multilevel school data review to determine student needs, and would align with guidance from the Pennsylvania Department of Education. In addition to requiring a comprehensive school counseling plan, our bill would spell out the way in which counselors spend their time, requiring that they spend at least 80% of their working time engaged in direct and indirect services to students on days that students were in school. These services could involve academic advising, career planning, social and emotional skill building, intervening with students at risk of dropping out, orienting new and transferring students, and contributing to decision-making teams and programs that directly impact students and families. Administrative responsibilities could take up no more than 20% of their time.
- iii. [SB907](#): Requires minimum of one full-time armed school security personnel during the school day [Passed Senate; In House Education Committee]
- iv. [SB375](#): School entities to make CPR/AED training and devices available in schools/IUs; requires one AED per building/athletic contest [Second consideration in Senate]

c. Legislative priorities:

- i. Mental health funding
- ii. Early childhood funding
- iii. Personnel shortages
- iv. Remove unnecessary barriers

V. Member Discussion

- a. Chairperson Bill Wood expressed appreciation for the work of the members in passing a resolution pertaining to a stance opposing public funds going to private schools without accountability (BCEF/School Vouchers).
 - i. GV, OASD, PASD, TESD, WCASD, CASD have all passed resolutions.
 - ii. AGSD & Oxford seeking to vote in March.
 - iii. UCFSD uncertain at this point in time due to another area of priority centered around dual taxation.

- b. Chairperson Wood also mentioned EITC/OITC where income limits are quite high. Rep Ceresi has mentioned a co-sponsorship memo being initiated looking at making scholarship tracking more robust, as well as tighter family income limits.
- c. Ethan Cramer mentioned the sudden passing of a teacher in Kennett Consolidated in the middle school and expressed appreciation to the CCIU for sending staff in support.

VI. CCSBLC Meeting Schedule

- a. Legislative Breakfast: March 1, 2023 @ 8:30 a.m.
 - b. VIRTUAL: April 24, 2024 @ 6:30 p.m.
 - c. IN PERSON: May 22, 2024 @ 7:00 p.m.
 - d. VIRTUAL: June 26, 2024 @ 6:30 p.m.
- II. The meeting was adjourned at 7:16 p.m.