

CCSBLC January 2024 Meeting
January 24, 2024

Attendees:

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

- I. Chairperson Bill Wood opened the meeting at 7:04 p.m.
- II. Chairperson Wood opened the floor inviting any members interested in serving in the position as Chair to voice their interest. Council agreed to support Bill Wood as the continued Chairperson.
- III. Dr. George Fiore, Executive Director of the CCIU, provided an update on the recent funding recommendations of the Basic Education Funding Commission.
 - a. The Commission was a result of the Commonwealth Court ruling that the existing basic education funding model is unconstitutional and does not support the *“thorough and efficient system of public education.”*
 - b. The Commission, a bipartisan group, was given one year to develop recommendations. Two recommendations were developed and a mid-January 2024 vote moves through a majority report.
 - i. Note there was a significant amount of overlap between the minority and majority report.
 - c. Majority report calls for \$9 billion increase in funding, which is unlikely to occur.
 - i. This may lead to a subsequent court case if movement is not made.
 - ii. The “hold harmless” clause* is a continued challenge in making funds available. [*Districts who are experiencing declining enrollment will not lose their existing level of state funding.]
 - d. The Governor has been indicating good faith efforts and is likely to put in a large, recommended increase in funding as part of his February 6 proposed budget address.
 - i. This will be unlikely to go through as proposed due to it being an election year. Recognize there will likely be trades made (e.g. cyber charter reform in exchange for school vouchers).
 - ii. Governor is looking to utilize the 2023-24 funding as the base fund which is a positive for Chester County districts as it was an increase.
- IV. Christa Fazio, CCIU Director of Communications, Marketing & Engagement, provided a legislative update as follows.
 - a. Six laws passed between December 13-14, 2023
 - i. **[Act 34 of 2023: Fiscal Code Bill \(prev. HB 1300\)](#)**
 1. Authorizes final 25% of 2023-24 budget

2. School-related provisions:
 - a. Payment in lieu of taxes (PILOT): increase \$2 to \$2.40 per acre for state-owned lands exempt from local property tax
 - b. Federal funds: PDE restricted use of unused ARPA funds
 - c. School improvement grants: funded through \$100 million transfer from unappropriated Level Up funding
 - d. School safety funding: \$5 million
- ii. **Act 33 of 2023: School Code Bill (prev. HB301)**
 1. Allocates...
 - a. \$300+ million to libraries and community colleges
 - b. \$100 million to school mental health services
 - c. \$175 million to school facility repairs, such as mold and asbestos abatement, \$100 million comes from funding previously earmarked for the Level Up program.
 - d. \$150 million increase to the Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) and Opportunity Scholarship Tax Credit (OSTC) programs.
 - e. \$10 million for Student Teacher Grant Program
 - f. \$14 million increase to CTC funding
 2. Addressing Teacher/Substitute Shortages
 - a. Extends Act 91 Provisions – “If, in the judgment of a school employer, an emergency or shortage of day-to-day substitute teachers exists” districts can utilize annuitants (retired educators receiving PSERS). Originally only through the 2022-23 school year but now extended permanently.
 - b. Substitute Teacher Flexibilities – Sub teaching permit for prospective teachers in a teacher program through 2025-26 school year; Indefinite ability to issue temporary cert to those who have completed their teacher prep program but have not yet earned certification.
 - c. Classroom Monitors – Individual allowed to deliver assignments preplanned by a professional employee; may not plan or create lessons/work; must have completed at least 60 hours of college work or 3 years experience as a paraprofessional. Can be used through the 2025-26 school year.
 - d. Student Teacher [Educator Pipeline] Grant Program - \$10 million allocation, funding includes leftover recovery funds; PA Higher Ed Assistance Agency is responsible for reviewing applications and distributing funds to schools who then pay the student teachers & cooperative teachers. Student teacher would receive a minimum grant of \$10,000. Those student teaching in an “unattractive” location or high rate of open positions would receive a minimum of \$5,000 more.

Cooperating teacher would also receive a minimum of \$2,000. There are requirements for approval including enrollment in a PA educator prep program, minimum GPA, clearances AND agree to work as a teacher in PA for a minimum of three years.

3. School Safety & Security
 - a. Eliminates the Office of Safe Schools in the PA Department of Education (PDE) and transfers responsibilities related to school safety and security to the School Safety and Security Committee under the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency.
 - b. School Safety and Security and School Mental Health Grants – Transfers \$100 million in federal ARPA funding for school mental health grants. Each school district will receive a base grant of \$100,000 and a pro rata share based on its adjusted average daily membership. Each intermediate unit, area career and technical school, and charter school will receive \$70,000. For 2023-24, funds committed by March 31, 2024; Subsequent years committed by December 31.
 - c. Allowable grant uses are expanded to include school-based diversion programs, intervention programs and education practices to assist students with persistent and disruptive and violent behavior. Grants also may be used to hire qualified professional staff members to provide assistance and services to these programs. Funds may be used for training school-based mental health professionals and to establish pathways to certification for school-based mental health professionals. Counties may establish a safe schools' collaborative to develop best practices for emergency responses involving school safety through an emergency preparedness planning approach.
4. Additional Directives through Act 33
 - a. Ready to Learn Block Grants – All districts should receive no less than amount received in prior year.
 - b. Social Security Payments - The payment of social security funds from the Basic Education Funding appropriation.
 - c. Ends Plancon 1.0; Moratorium for Plancon 2.0 until July 1, 2024
 - d. School Lunch and Breakfast Reimbursement - Directs PDE to reimburse all school breakfast meals and reduced-price lunches at the free rate.
 - e. Removal of derogatory terms
 - f. Financially Distressed School funding
 - g. Payments to IUs - Provides for IUs to receive 5.5% of the appropriation for special education funding.
 - h. School Police Officer Reporting

- i. Increases the amount of tax credits available under the Education Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) and Opportunity Scholarship Tax Credit (OSTC) programs by \$150 million for a total of \$555 million.
 - i. Changes from 80% to 90% Use of Funds (controls administrative fees to 10%)
 - ii. Changes data reporting requirements
 - iii. Makes data publicly available
- iii. **Act 35 of 2023: School Code Bill (prev. SB843)**
 - 1. Addressing the Commonwealth court ruling in February 2023 that our current school funding system is unconstitutional and must be reformed.
 - a. Extended BEF Commission Report Date to January 11.
 - b. Extends Special Education Funding Commission to reconvene in 2026 (was 2024).
 - 2. Educator Workforce
 - a. Public Job Posting Database for school entities – voluntary, no-cost advertisement opportunity on PDE site.
 - b. Instructional Vacancy Data – Annual August reporting of vacancies, use of long-term subs and use of emergency permits.
 - c. Data Transparency-Educator Workforce Data – public view of educator supply/demand/preparation program outcomes/retention; report by PDE w/Dept of Labor & Industry re: trends and projections.
 - d. Interstate Teacher Mobility Compact - Allows the governor to enter into a multi-state compact that allows teachers in approved positions to be granted equivalent licenses in Pennsylvania. A commission is also created to administer the compact.
 - 3. Personal Finance
 - a. Economic Education and Personal Finance – By the 2025-26 school year, PDE is required to develop model curriculum for economic education and personal financial literacy programs.
 - b. Personal Finance Literacy Course – Beginning in the 2026-27 school year, school entities and nonpublic schools are required to provide a mandatory course in personal financial literacy. The course must be worth at least one-half credit and be completed by students sometime between grades 9-12. PDE must also provide clarification regarding teacher certifications for personal financial literacy.
 - 4. Miscellaneous

- a. Recovery High School – Makes changes to the Drug and Alcohol Recovery High School Program, including payment redirection and enrollment parameters.
 - b. Pre-K Counts Reporting – Requires PDE to collect and report detailed enrollment information from approved providers in the Pre-K Counts program and hold quarterly meetings with the chairpersons of the Senate and House Appropriations Committees.
 - c. Attendance in other Districts (specific to Duquesne City tuition fix)
 - d. Credit Card Education Requirement – 2024-25 for Higher Education
- iv. **Act 52 of 2023: Calculating ADM for College in the High School**
 - 1. Allows high school students who participate in a dual enrollment program through an institution of higher education and do not leave their school entity to attend the dual credit course to be included in the school entity’s average daily membership (ADM).
- v. **Act 55 of 2023: Dental Screenings**
 - 1. An Act that amends the Public School Code of 1949 to allow public health dental hygiene practitioners to perform school dental screenings. Currently, a district may only utilize a school dentist.
- vi. **Act 56 of 2023: Minimum Number of School Days/Hours**
 - 1. Beginning in the 2023-2024 school year and continuing each school year thereafter, a school entity shall provide within the school year:
 - a. (1) a minimum of one hundred eighty (180) days of instruction;
 - b. **or** (2) nine hundred (900) hours of instruction at the elementary level or nine hundred ninety (990) hours of instruction at the secondary level.
 - 2. Dr. Fiore cautioned about making changes too quickly due to potential issues with collective bargaining agreements.
- b. Recent movement of mental health-related bills.
 - i. **HB1367**: Referred to the House Education Committee (6-12-23). Adds a section to the PIAA CIPPE form about understanding mental health and resources available to the student athlete and requires coaches to take a mental health training course that must be approved by the Department of Health.
 - ii. **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.

- iii. [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
- iv. [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.

c. School start time: Newly introduced legislation

- i. [HB1848](#): Referred to the House Education Committee (11-14-23). Beginning with the 2026-2027 school year, this legislation would require the instructional day for public secondary schools to begin no earlier than 8:15 a.m. Further, it would require each governing board of a public school entity to inform its school community about the health and academic impacts of sleep deprivation on secondary school students and the benefits of a later school start time, and to discuss local strategies to implement a delayed school start time.

d. Additional legislation is unlikely to move in the next few months due to the following:

- i. House is at a stalemate:
 - 1. 101-101 (special election for vacancy planned for Feb. 13).
 - 2. Needed roof repairs in the Capital building.
- ii. Senate unwilling to move without the House
 - 1. Minimal session days currently scheduled (1 in Jan.; 3 in Feb.).
- iii. February 6 Governor's Budget address
 - 1. Much of February/March will be spent in appropriations.

V. Legislative Breakfast

- a. Scheduled for Friday, March 1 beginning at 8:30 a.m. – Invitations have been sent to districts this week for distribution to all district school board members.
 - b. This serves as an opportunity to meet with local legislators and their office, as well as hear updates on timely topics.
- VI. Legislative Priorities Survey
- a. Survey will be released to all school board members in Chester County in the coming week to help inform legislative breakfast topics.
 - b. CCSBLC members are encouraged to help prompt completion of the survey by all district board members.
- VII. Member Discussion
- a. Chairperson Wood: Led discussion around the potential to develop a shared resolution opposing public funds going to private schools without accountability (BCEF/School Vouchers)? As in the past, this would be an agreed upon resolution that each school board would pass individually and if there is shared interest, would be passed by the CCSBLC as well.
 - i. Chairperson Wood is in discussion with neighboring county legislative councils as well in regard to this topic.
 - ii. Chairperson Wood did share two drafted resolution options for consideration by district boards. He is asking for CCSBLC members to assist in trying to get the resolution passed (whichever will work best for your board; please feel free to pass along edits) prior to the March 1 legislative breakfast.
 - iii. Benefits of a board resolution:
 - 1. Amplify voice, especially if able to come together as a united county.
- VIII. CCSBLC Meeting Schedule
- a. VIRTUAL: February 28, 2024 @ 6:30 p.m.
 - b. Legislative Breakfast: March 1, 2023 @ 8:30 a.m.
 - c. VIRTUAL: April 24, 2024 @ 6:30 p.m.
 - d. IN PERSON: May 22, 2024 @ 7:00 p.m.
 - e. VIRTUAL: June 26, 2024 @ 6:30 p.m.
- II. The meeting was adjourned at 8:34 p.m.