

## CCSBLC Meeting Summary

Wednesday, January 25, 2023

6:00 to 8:10 p.m.

### Members in attendance:

1. Bill Wood, CCSBLC Chair, Avon Grove School District
2. Kate Shaw, West Chester Area School District
3. Ethan Cramer, Kennett Consolidated School District
4. Susan Audrain, Tredyffrin-Easttown School District
5. Victoria Baratta, Unionville-Chadds Ford School District
6. Victoria Valentin-Walker, Phoenixville Area School District
7. Caryn Ghrayeb, Downingtown Area School District
8. Brian Fox, Octorara School District
9. William Kloss, Oxford Area School District

**CCIU Staff in Attendance;** Dr. George F. Fiore, Executive Director, Mary Jeanne Curley, Director of Communications and Learning Solutions; Melissa Smith, Assistant Director of Communications and Learning Solutions and Haley Taylor, Communications Specialist

1. Bill Wood, interim CCSBLC Chair, School Director, called the meeting at 6:35 p.m. Bill Wood welcomed everyone, and members introduced themselves.
2. Mary Curley, Director of Communications and Learning Solutions, began the meeting by giving a brief overview of the legislative process.
  - a. The governor's office, the senate (50 seats) 26 votes is the majority, the house of representatives (203 seats in Pennsylvania – one of the largest in the nation) 102 votes is the majority, the Board of Education, Department of Education.
  - b. It takes about 18 months for a bill to become a law.
    - a. Fast tracking a bill can be as quick as 2-3 weeks
      1. House education, consideration, second consideration (can amend the bill), third is an amendment or final consideration.
      2. If passed, sent to another chamber, and will need to go through an additional 3 rounds of consideration.
      3. Governor has 10 days to sign a bill. If signed, the bill will become a law, or the Governor can veto the bill and will need 2/3 vote from the house and senate to override the veto. No action is an action. If the bill is not signed in ten days, it automatically becomes a law.
  - c. Tracking Legislation:
    - a. 2,626 education bills were filed, but only 113 bills were enacted.
    - b. If there are any important or relevant bills or disturbing bills moving forward in legislation, we come together to draft joint position papers
    - c. We participate in Day on the Hill
    - d. We encourage legislative reach out
    - e. Share legislative updates to Superintendents and Job-Alike groups.
      1. Tailor important legislative topics to those job-alike groups
3. Legislative Update
  1. A special meeting will take place on February 7, 2023
    - i. Legislation is likely to resume after the special meeting
    - ii. Democrats are more than likely to take majority of the House

- b. Charter School Reform
    - a. Keep an eye on the leaders in Philadelphia and other coloring counties such as Delaware County, as the number of students attending non-traditional public schools or private schools.
    - c. No house of education Committee yet
4. Senate Update:
- a. **SB 84 (Sponsors: Phillips-Hill & Schwank)** – This bill passed unanimously in the Senate on January 18. Protecting the First Amendment Right to Freedom of Religious Expression - Amends the Public School Code of 1949 to repeal the provision prohibiting public school teachers from wearing religious garb or insignia while in the performance of their duties. Currently, Section 1112 prohibits a teacher from wearing any garb, mark, emblem or insignia that would indicate he or she is a member of or adherent to any religious order or sect while in the performance of their duties as a teacher. A teacher who violates this ban must be suspended from teaching for a term of one year, or permanently disqualified from teaching after multiple offenses. Furthermore, a public school director can be held criminally liable for failing to enforce this prohibition.

In the case *Nichol v. Arin Intermediate Unit 28* in the United States District Court, W.D. Pennsylvania held that Arin Intermediate Unit 28's religious affiliations policy violates the Free Exercise of Religion and Free Speech Clauses of the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. The teacher was suspended pursuant to the Garb Statute and Arin's religious affiliation policy from her job as an instructional assistant for refusing to comply with her supervisor's request that she remove or conceal a small cross she regularly wore on a necklace. As a result of the ruling, the plaintiff was rehired with back pay. Based on this decision, Section 1112 is no longer warranted.

- b. **SB 114 (Brooks)** – This bill passed unanimously in the Senate on January 18. Firefighter Training Pilot Program for High School Students - Amends the Public School Code of 1949 to establish a pilot program to provide fire training to secondary school students through institutions of higher education. This bill would create a pilot program for community colleges and universities in the PA State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) to give interested high school students training in firefighting. This legislation passed the Senate unanimously in April 2021 but was not considered by the full House before the close of the session.

As documented in the SR 6 report, Pennsylvania is facing a severe shortage of volunteer firefighters, with the current number of volunteers down to less than 15% of the number of volunteers in the 1970s. By encouraging school districts to partner with institutions of higher education, we can help recruit and retain firefighters at a time when first responders are desperately needed. This legislation would award three grants of \$150,000 each, which would be distributed to three community colleges or PASSHE schools in the Commonwealth, one in the eastern, central, and western parts of the state. The grants will be used to establish fire training programs for students in high school during the school year, with the hope they will remain firefighters for years to come.

5. Upcoming CCSBLC meetings:
  - a. Wednesday, February 15 – **in person**
  - b. Wednesday, March 22 - virtual
  - c. Legislative Breakfast - Thursday, April 20 at 8:30 a.m. TCHS Brandywine Campus Cafeteria 8:30 a.m.
  - d. Wednesday, May 24 – virtual
  - e. Wednesday, June 28 – in person
  - f. July - No meeting - Legislature Not in Session
  - g. August - No meeting - Legislature Not in Session
  
6. Bill Wood emphasized the importance of completing the legislative priority survey
  - a. Melissa Smith gave an in-depth presentation of the survey itself the complimentary legislative priority background document, the results we collected and the actions that the CCSBLC plays.
  - b. The CCSBLC also agreed on a few revisions to the survey and agreed to add a question regarding teacher/staff shortages.
  - c. The survey will be sent on January 30, 2023
    1. We ask that you remind your board members to complete the priority survey.
  
7. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:10 p.m.