

**Chester County School Board Legislative Council
February 24, 2021 Meeting**

Attendees:

Blake Emmanuel, Melissa Booth, Bill Wood, Bob Tenga, Lisa Yelovich, Joyce Houghton, Dave Kronenberg, Rachel Gibson, George Fiore (CCIU), Mary Curley (CCIU), Melissa Smith (CCIU)

Agenda:

1. Welcome and Introductions, Co-Chairs, Melissa Booth and Blake Emmanuel
2. CCSBLC Resolution Supporting Prioritizing Vaccine for School Personnel
3. Legislative Update
 - a. Senate Voucher Bill
 - b. COVID Federal Funding dollars
 - c. Letter to Superintendents Regarding Cares Funding
 - d. USDOE
4. House Education Committee
 - a. Bills in Committee
5. Senate Education Committee
 - a. Bills in Committee of Note
6. Legislative Briefing
 - a. Thursday, March 11, 2:30 to 3:30 p.m.

Meeting Notes:

1. Legislative Updates (presented by Mary Curley)
 - a. SCO 670: Voucher Co-Sponsorship Memo
 - i. "Excellence in Education for All Act"
 1. Sponsored by Senator Scott Martin, Senate Ed Chair
 2. Education Opportunity Accounts for PA's most vulnerable students
 3. Expansion of the existing EITC/OSTC tax credit scholarship programs
 4. Charter school reforms and innovations
 5. Equal access to the best public education, regardless of ZIP code
 6. Protections for coronavirus learning pods
 - ii. Bill is not yet introduced and not yet available to be reviewed; No additional information currently available.
 - iii. Bill is expected to be introduced by mid-March
 - iv. The votes exist to move it out of committee; believe to also have votes on Senate floor
 - v. *Area for discussion:* Currently a push from charter & non-public schools to lobby that they are doing a better job at educating students than public schools are doing; Desire for public schools to reach out to legislators to highlight the progress being made in public schools and what we are doing to support our students.

- vi. This same type of legislation is being floated in many state legislatures (especially Republican led) across the US as a nationwide effort.
- b. USDE Assessment Waiver
 - i. Received a letter from the US Dept of Education on Tuesday, February 23 indicating they will not provide a waiver for testing, but have indicated the following:
 1. States may request a waiver for Accountability and School Identification requirements.
 2. Waive the requirement that the Academic Achievement indicator be adjusted to account for a participation rate below 95 percent (i.e. you will not be penalized if less than 95% participate)
 3. Assessment data not to be used for: (Will need to reestablish the categories in 2022 and utilize data from 2021 school year)
 - a. Comparative or rating purposes
 - b. For CSI or TSI identification (If you are currently in one of these areas you will likely stay, but more thorough information to come)
 4. Transparency and reporting still required to be made public
 - a. Maintain State and Local Report Cards
 - b. Disaggregated Chronic Absenteeism
 - c. Student and educator access to technology (as possible).
 5. Provide flexibility in administering assessments, including:
 - a. Administering a shortened version of its statewide assessments;
 - b. Offering remote administration, where feasible; and/or
 - c. Extending the testing window to the greatest extent practicable, such as
 - i. multiple testing windows and/or extending the testing window into the summer or even the beginning of the 2021-2022 school year.
 - ii. States that elect to extend testing windows should also consider how they can make results available to the public in a timely manner after assessments are administered.
 6. States must provide a public comment period prior to submitting for waiver
 - ii. Matt Stem from PDE in a House Ed Committee hearing did indicate the state will apply to USD for the accountability waiver. In order to go for the waiver states must hold a public comment period prior to submitting the waiver request. PDE is looking to extend the state testing window into at least September of next school year. PDE at this time has no plans to provide the Keystones or PSSAs in an online format.
 - iii. May need to prepare for lower participation rate and the associated small sample size (not truly representative) on which decisions may be made.

Recognize the politics behind it and how to navigate it within our communities.

1. Consider sharing the data currently being tracked within each district and using the testing as an outlier.
 2. Some schools are looking at setting the last day of school as May 31 and setting up testing June 1 – 8.
- c. Distributing Federal Funding (COVID 5)
- i. Act 1 of 2021: COVID Relief Federal Funding
 1. Distributes the \$197 Million GEER (Governor’s Emergency Educational Relief) Funding – funds for those who did not receive federal COVID assistance to-date:
 - a. \$150 million competitive grant program under the Department of Education to assist non-public schools that have not received government assistance
 - b. \$20 million for Career and Technical Schools
 - c. \$14 million for Community Colleges (redistributed to community colleges despite originally tagged for IUs plus an additional \$3M added to Career & Technical; Leaves IUs without any COVID support which can impact pricing to districts)
 - d. \$8.075 million for Private Residential Rehabilitative Institutions, charter schools for the deaf and blind, and approved private schools
 - e. \$5 million for the State System of Higher Education
 - ii. Transfer \$145 million from the Workers' Compensation Security Fund to the COVID-19 Response Restricted Account to provide county block grants (~\$50,000) to assist the hospitality industry, including restaurants, bars and hotels.
 - iii. Melissa Shusterman is co-sponsoring a bill to push funding for IUs to help overcome the removal of the IUs from Act 1.
 - d. Refresher of Governor Wolf’s Budget proposal
 - i. Still no word on what this may end up looking like.
 - ii. House Appropriations Committee will hold its budget hearing with PDE on March 1st which may give an initial look into their thinking; Senate Appropriations Committee will meet with PDE on March 18.
 - iii. House has been holding hearings virtually; Senate has waited and will not begin until March.
 - iv. Senate Republicans sent a letter to all Superintendents in the state to tell them to be careful with Covid dollars and not to use them for ongoing expenses. Liken it to ARRA funding during the Great Recession.
 1. Districts did not use ARRA funding for operational expenses during that time but rather the legislature replaced BEF with the ARRA and then never replaced it forcing the hand.

2. Fear we will see a cut in the new budget because the thought is that we've received so much money via COVID, but the challenge is they are now telling us not to use it for operational and there are increased needs.
 - a. Anything below act 1 index above current budget will likely equate to local tax increases to cover necessary costs.
- e. Refresher of Charter School Reform Policy recommendations from the Governor
 - i. See the \$9,500 statewide cyber charter tuition rate as a good point
 1. BVA expense at most is \$5,500 all in
 2. Current cyber charters are currently charging \$11,000 - \$27,000+ per kid for regular ed student.
 3. Keep in mind that all Chesco school districts run the highest performing cyber charter school – 21st Century Cyber Charter
 - a. Initially planned to rebate back to school districts but 2002 bill stopped that; leads to an overabundance of funds that 21stCCC currently doesn't even know what to do with.

2. Additional Updates

- a. House Appropriations – PDE: March 1 10 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
- b. Legislative Briefing – March 11, 2:30 – 3:30 p.m.
- c. Senate Appropriations – PDE: March 18, 10 a.m.
- d. Next CCSBLC Meeting: March 24, 6:30 -8:00 p.m.

3. Proposed Resolution: Prioritizing Vaccine for School Personnel

- a. Proposing to move ALL school personnel into vaccination group 1a
- b. Recommend requesting each school district to follow suit at the individual school district level, as well as fellow county-level legislative councils.
 - i. Kennett, Avon Grove, OJR, Phoenixville all indicated taking back to the district
- c. Representative Dan Williams has been holding weekly (Tues) & bi-weekly (Friday) community meetings surrounding COVID and he has indicated that he has inquired directly why school personnel is not being included in 1a and he has mentioned that there seems to be no appetite for it at Dept of Health.
 - i. Unemployment compensation, school reopening & vaccination are the top three call drivers to his office.
 1. While the resolution does not mention employment, it may be worth mentioning when talking with legislators about the impact of schools and employment levels due to childcare.
- d. Look to potentially mention as part of the Legislative Briefing on March 12 within the "Other Topics" segment of the agenda.
- e. The resolution is not just to drive political agenda, but it also serves as a positive message to our teachers and staff that we are looking after them.
- f. Motion to pass resolution: Bill Woods; Second: Dave Kronenberg
- g. All in favor: Unanimous (8)

h. Next steps: Mary will finalize and provide to council members by morning of Thursday, February 25.

4. AOB (Any Other Business)

a. Dave K requested confirmation that everything covered during this meeting also gets shared with Superintendents; Dr. Fiore confirmed.

Meeting adjourned 7:37 p.m.