



State House Update

The SC House is currently on a two-week furlough and the Senate will take a week-long break beginning the week of April 7.

House of Representatives

On March 17, the House gave third reading to its version of the \$23.6 billion state budget for FY15-16 ([H.3701](#)) before passing it on for consideration in the Senate. House lawmakers approved much of what was in the K-12 education plan submitted by the House Ways and Means Committee, with a few exceptions.

The House budget plan directs \$94M to the Education Finance Act (EFA) and increases the base student cost (BSC) by \$100 per student, from \$2,120 to \$2,220, still below the statutorily required amount of \$2,801 for 2015-16. Other budget highlights are: \$8.5 million for “transition funds” for locally sponsored charter schools and school districts negatively impacted by the changes to the EFA funding formula; \$4.9 million for expansion of the Reading Coaches program; \$1.5 million for expansion of Summer Reading Camps; \$29 million in lottery funds for technology initiatives; \$4 million for professional development in technology; \$9 million for bus shops; \$11.8 million for charter schools; and \$2.9 million for virtual education expansion.

Two budget provisos of note are:

[Proviso 1.66](#), which establishes the Child Development Education Pilot Program (amended as the full-day 4K proviso). This deletes language concerning the pilot program and directs that students residing in a school district with a poverty index of 70 percent or greater may participate in the SC Early Reading Development and Education Program, which includes public and private service providers; and

Proviso 1.68, which establishes a statewide tuition tax credit program for exceptional needs children (amended to expand the definition of eligible students, including students whose parent is active duty military, students in a child care facility, foster home or residential group care home, homeless students or students at risk of school failure or “at academic risk”). The amended proviso also increases the certification and reporting requirements for the organizations that accept donations and award scholarships.

Senate

On March 18, State Education Superintendent Molly Spearman presented her budget request to the Senate Finance Subcommittee on K-12 Education. This request included the following additions to the House version of the budget: \$1.5 million additional for Summer Reading Camps; \$5 million additional for Reading Coaches; \$3.5 million additional for Adult Education; \$7 million additional for school bus purchases; and \$3 million additional for bus shops.

This week, the full Senate addressed the following education bills of note:

S.320 (CPR Bill), which requires instruction in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and the use of an automated external defibrillator (AED) to all students enrolled in the school district as a requirement for graduation from high school. The bill was amended to specify that instruction on the AED was for knowledge of its operation, not hands on instruction. (Received second reading March 31.)

S.437 (Civics Education Initiative), which requires students to take the US Civics Citizenship Test as part of their half-credit Government class. The bill directs districts to award a certificate to students making a 60 or higher and to report the scores to the Education Oversight Committee for reporting on the District Report card. The bill provides waivers for students on IEPs. (Received third reading on March 31.)

Also this week, the Senate Education K-12 Subcommittee addressed the following:

S.508 (CDV Bill), which adds the subject of domestic violence and healthy family relationships to the standards beginning with the 2016-17 school year. A waiver is available for students who miss this instruction. (Received a favorable report April 1 and moves to the full Senate Education Committee with amendment to allow the virtual school to also offer this instruction.)

H.3849 (FOIA Bill), which exempts personally identifiable information in educator evaluations of public school educators and student teachers from public disclosure under Freedom of Information Act requests. (Received a favorable report April 1 and moves to the full Senate Education Committee.)

The Senate Finance Committee and its various subcommittees will continue their work on the state budget when the Senate returns from furlough the week of April 14.

To read and/or track other pending legislation which may be of interest to you and your SIC, or to find out how to contact your legislators regarding particular bills and issues, visit the SC General Assembly website at www.scstatehouse.gov.

SC School Improvement Council

<http://sic.sc.gov>

800-868-2253