

The first bill deadline has passed and now we turn our focus mostly to what's referred to as omnibus bills, specifically policy bills at this point. The House Education Policy Committee passed their policy bill this week (see details below). We will see the Senate policy bill next week.

House Omnibus Education Policy Bill

The week the committee debated and passed their Omnibus Education Policy Bill. The House proposal includes some provisions from the MDE policy priorities introduced recently but also a number of additional proposals. What is significant about this bill is the number of mandates placed on school districts. Some of which were never even heard in committee and only seen for the first time when the committee took up the policy bill. Examples of some of the new mandates include:

- New required academic standards, curriculum requirements, and graduation requirements for substance misuse prevention, sexual exploitation prevention, a consent program to prevent and reduce the incidence of sexual assault, and a credit in civics.
- School districts must screen all students for dyslexia between the beginning of kindergarten and the beginning of second grade, as well as any student who exhibits characteristics associated with dyslexia from second grade on.
- School districts must not limit a student's participation in any school activities, graduation ceremonies, field trips, athletics, activity clubs, other extracurricular activities; access to materials, technology, or other items provided to other students; or any other restriction prohibited the public-school fee law due to unpaid student meal balances or any other unpaid fee.

Early learning and community education provisions included in the House policy bill (which were also part of the MDE policy bill) are:

- Adds language to allow children in protective services or experiencing homelessness to qualify for early learning scholarships without providing income verification
- Clarifies that children receiving a scholarship are required to receive developmental screening within 90 days of their third birthday
- Strikes an obsolete provision allowed early learning scholarship sites to participate the statewide scholarship program prior to becoming rated
- Clarifies that the state may select more than one high school equivalency test.

More details on the Governor's Budget Recommendations

As part of his supplemental budget recommendations, Governor Dayton is proposing an increase of almost \$40 million for E-12 education. Significant provisions include a safe school initiative, additional funding for special education and a continuation of funding for school readiness plus/voluntary prekindergarten. More details to follow as we see his recommendations introduced

as legislation but as a reminder, the key components of his proposal for early childhood and community education include:

School readiness plus: Permanently funds school readiness plus, an extension of voluntary prekindergarten which was and allows for the program to grow by 5 percent each year.

Early learning scholarships: Proposes to extend the time the MDE has to spend their annual appropriation for Early Learning Scholarships from 24 months to up to 27 months before unspent scholarship funds are canceled. This would allow more time for parents to use scholarships once they have been awarded and for the agency to reallocate scholarship money that was not used by the original recipients. This change is intended to lower the amount of unused dollars at the end of a biennium in the Early Childhood Scholarships appropriation. In 2017 \$3 million cancelled from the Early Childhood Scholarships program.

Help Me Grow: Provides an additional \$1.5 million in the Help Me Grow initiative, which provides child development information to parents and childcare providers and helps identify young children with developmental and emotional concerns.

GED: Fully funds the cost of taking the GED once a year for any Minnesotan pursuing their High School Equivalency.

COMMITTEE HEARINGS OF INTEREST

Next week both the [House E12 Education Finance Committee](#) and the [Senate E12 Education Finance Committees](#) are scheduled to hear a [bill](#) to require a portion of voluntary prekindergarten participants to be served through a mixed delivery of services. MCEA will be testifying with concerns. And, the [Senate Education Policy Committee](#) is scheduled to hear the MinneMinds [legislation](#). Click committee links for hearing details.

ADVOCACY FOR CHILDREN DAY

Advocacy for Children Day is scheduled for Thursday, March 29. Click [here](#) for more details.

YOUTH DAY AT THE CAPITOL

Youth Day at the Capitol is scheduled for Tuesday, March 27. Click [here](#) for more details.

BILL INTRODUCTIONS

[SF3516](#) (Nelson): Requiring a portion of voluntary prekindergarten participants to be served through a mixed delivery of services

[HF4032](#) (Gunther): Greater Minnesota child care facility capital grant program established, grant funding provided, bonds issued, and money appropriated.

[HF4034](#) (Gunther): Rural Minnesota sustainable child care funding provided, and money appropriated.

[HF4113](#) (Kresha): Home visiting programs for families with young children appropriation modified.