

Senate Republicans Announce Budget Targets

This week, Senate Republicans announced their budget targets which include an overall target of \$51.9 billion for the two-year state budget. Their proposal includes an additional \$152 million for E12 education, a \$47.116 increase for the FY22-23 biennium. Senate Republicans highlighted some of the proposals they will advance including [education savings accounts](#), funding for student mental health, initiatives to reduce racial disparities and increase the number of teachers of color.

Governor releases revised budget recommendations

On Thursday, Governor Walz released additional budget recommendations based on the February forecast. His revised budget adds \$86 million to his original education finance recommendations of \$622 million. Specific proposals include:

- \$68 million to help mitigate declining compensatory revenue due to pandemic enrollment loss.
- An additional \$10 million for non-exclusionary discipline training.
- An additional \$10 million to expand access to tutoring services.
- Funding for student support personnel for intermediate and cooperative districts (this is in addition to his current proposal for student support personnel for all districts).

House advances funding for summer learning opportunities

This week, the House Education Finance Committee advanced legislation to provide summer learning opportunities to help mitigate the loss of learning time due to the pandemic. [HF1064](#) provides \$104.5 million for declining enrollment aid and for initiatives including summer enrichment programs, early learning, mental health supports, mentoring and tutoring, summer college for high school graduates, and adult basic education. Many of these components are also included in Gov. Walz's budget recommendations. The House is expected to vote on this proposal before the legislative break but since the Senate has yet to take up a similar package anything becoming law before the legislative break is extremely unlikely.

Committee updates

House Early Childhood Finance and Policy Committee: This week the committee the [Governor's budget and policy recommendations related to early childhood education](#). Proposals include:

- *VPK/SR+:* Continuation of the 7,160 funded seats in the voluntary prekindergarten and school readiness plus.
- *Summer 2021 programming:* \$20 million for a one-time appropriation to provide summer preschool or prekindergarten to 4- and 5-year-olds. These funds can be used in a star-rated, public, or private, preschool or prekindergarten in-person learning program. This proposal is also included in HF1064, legislation the House is advancing to provide a range of funding to address the loss of learning time due to the pandemic.

- *Child care assistance program*: Increases the maximum rate paid to child care providers under the child care assistance program from the 25th percentile of the 2018 child care provider rate survey to the 30th percentile of the most recent survey.
- *ECFE*: Allows individuals participating in alloparenting to participate in early childhood family education (ECFE) programs.
- *Early learning scholarships*: Provides that an early learning scholarship cancels if a recipient has not enrolled in an eligible program within three months of receiving the scholarship.
- *English learners*: Modifies the definition of “English learner” to include ECSE students between the ages of 3 and 5 so that these students are eligible for English learner services.
- *School breakfast*: Allows schools to receive school breakfast reimbursement for early childhood special education (ECSE) students participating in a voluntary prekindergarten program, like how schools receive the reimbursement for other voluntary prekindergarten students.

The committee also heard [legislation](#), authored by Rep. Jim Davnie, to remove the freeze on PWII early learning scholarships. Kristen Stuenkel, Director of Community Education for Columbia Heights Public Schools, testified in support of the proposal on behalf of the MN Community Education Association.

Both bills were laid over for possible inclusion in the House Omnibus Early Education Finance and Policy bill.

Key dates to remember:

- March 26–April 5: Legislative Easter/Passover break.
- April 9: Third deadline. This is the deadline by which committees must act favorably on major appropriation and finance bills.
- May 17: End of the regular session.