



**March 5, 2015**

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PSBA Legislative Report

*The Senate and House of Representatives were in session this week. With budget hearings set to begin, the House has now adjourned until Monday, March 30. The Senate will return on Monday, April 13.*

#### **Top Stories**

- \* **PSBA encouraged by governor's proposed 2015-16 budget for education; Acting Education Secretary Rivera presents overview for members**
- \* **House passes charter reform bill**

#### **Latest News**

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#### **Top Stories**

##### **PSBA encouraged by governor's proposed 2015-16 budget for education; Acting Education Secretary Rivera presents overview for members**

PSBA is encouraged by the investments in public education Gov. Tom Wolf outlined this week in his proposed 2015-16 state budget. The association noted that much work needs done to ensure that critical education funding remains a part of the final budget, and PSBA stands ready and willing to work with members of both parties in developing a budget that ensures the future strength of the state's public schools.

“The Pennsylvania Constitution includes a powerful mandate requiring the state to provide a

‘thorough and efficient’ public school system. Gov. Wolf’s budget proposal works toward meeting that mandate, but the road ahead to fully realize fulfillment of this is long and hard,” said PSBA Executive Director Nathan Mains. “A fair, adequate and equitable funding formula is needed to ensure the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania properly provides the resources needed today and into the future. The competitiveness of our great state relies on us maintaining the world-class public education system we have.”

Acting Secretary of Education Pedro Rivera was at the PSBA Conference Center this week to present a special state budget overview and answer questions from members. Rivera said that the governor’s \$29.9 billion budget is “a bold spending plan” that provides significant increases for K-12 education, including boosts in basic and special education funding, career and technical education, and the restoration of programs including reimbursement for charter school tuition. The budget proposal also includes a plan for funding reform of cyber charter schools and establishes a funding formula specifically for cyber charter schools.

[Click here for PSBA’s detailed budget report and links to subsidy charts and other budget information.](#) *(Budget/subsidy links are found under the “Resources” section of the budget page.)*

### **House passes charter reform bill**

This week the House of Representatives passed [House Bill 530](#) (Rep. Reese, R-Westmoreland), a charter school reform measure that contains provisions similar to legislation that was considered by the General Assembly in the previous legislative session. No amendments were inserted into the bill, and it passed as originally introduced with a vote of [118-78](#). PSBA acknowledges HB 530 as a first step toward charter reform and is encouraged with certain reforms in the bill that will provide transparency and clarity. However, PSBA also believes that greater accountability measures need to be adopted and will be working with Senate staff as the bill moves to that chamber for consideration. [Click here to see PSBA’s detailed description of House Bill 530.](#)

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## **Latest News**

### **Senate action**

#### **The Senate adopted:**

**Purely Public Charities/Tax Exempt Status --** [Senate Resolution 28](#) (Sen. Scavello, R-Monroe) creates a Joint Senate-House Select Committee on Institutions of Purely Public Charity to study and work with various stakeholders to determine whether additional legislation is needed regarding the determination of purely public charities that receive property tax exemptions. The committee would have one year from its creation to report its findings. The resolution is now in the House Rules Committee for further consideration.

#### **Re-referred to the Senate Appropriations Committee:**

**Youth Vaccinations –** [Senate Resolution 27](#) (Sen. Kitchen, D-Philadelphia) directs the

Advisory Committee on Public Health Law of the Joint State Government Commission to study the issue of youth vaccinations to determine whether any amendments should be made to state law. The committee's recommendations would be due in 12 months.

## **House action**

### **The House passed:**

**Study of Career Training Programs** -- PSBA supported **House Resolution 102** (Rep. Saylor, R-York), which authorizes the creation of a subcommittee on Technical Education and Career Readiness to study and make recommendations concerning career training programs. The committee will investigate existing science, technical, engineering and mathematics (STEM) schools and vocational-technical programs and develop proposals to promote career pathways to meet existing employment needs. Rep. Seth Grove (R-York) is the chairman of the new subcommittee that will make its report by November 2016.

### **PDE issues ACCESS Program update**

The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) recently announced an update regarding changes to the School-Based ACCESS Program and its efforts to seek a new contract with a third party vendor to process claims and perform other functions. The state's current contract with Public Consulting Group (PCG) is set to expire on June 30, 2015.

PDE acknowledges there have been significant challenges with the program over the last few years, primarily due to mandated programmatic changes by the federal government. By way of background, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) conducted a Financial Management Review in 2012 of Pennsylvania's School-Based ACCESS Program to assure the state's compliance with all applicable federal statutes, regulations, and CMS policies related to school-based medical services. As a result of CMS' review, DHS was required to implement a CMS-approved, cost-based reimbursement methodology and an annual cost reconciliation and settlement process.

The state contracted with third-party vendor PCG to process direct service and special transportation claims, invoice for local educational agency administrative claiming, and document random moment time studies. In order to prepare for a new contract term and help to mitigate CMS' initial findings, DHS has issued a RFP to solicit bids from potential offerors. The new RFP will help the commonwealth better address these federal changes by strengthening contract terms and establishing greater accountability through increased monitoring of vendor performance and deliverables. Proposals are due to DHS this Friday, March 6, 2015. [Click here for more information about this RFP \(RFP 10-14\).](#)

### **On the Hill: Upcoming Meetings**

*Upcoming events currently scheduled include:*

#### **Thursday, March 12**

\* The **Basic Education Funding Commission** will conduct a public hearing in Harrisburg to discuss funding issues.

### **Budget Hearings**

Following the governor's budget address this week, the Senate and House Appropriations Committees will convene hearings on specific components of the proposal.

\* **Monday, March 16** -- The House Appropriations Committee will meet with the Department of Education.

\* **Monday, March 23** -- The Senate and House Appropriations Committees will conduct separate hearings with the Public School Employees Retirement System.

\* **Monday, March 30** -- The Senate Appropriations Committee will meet with the Department of Education.

### **Wednesday, April 15**

\* The **House Finance Committee** postponed its meeting that was to be held on March 3 to discuss priorities and issues of counties, municipalities and school districts. It has been rescheduled for next month. *PSBA will be presenting testimony at the meeting.*