



## **Capitol Corner**

### **An ECIC Legislative Update**

#### **June 6, 2008**

### **Budgets Begin to Move Back Out of the House**

The House was able to pass back to the Senate five budget bills on Thursday before they ran into a procedural problem and decided to go home in the early evening. Prior to adjourning, the House passed budgets for Community Colleges (SB 1094) the Department of Community Health (SB 1093), the Department of Corrections (SB 1095), the Department of Education (SB 1096), and the Department of Natural Resources (SB 1106).

The Senate when it receives these bills will reject the House versions and send the bills to conference committees. The conference committees made up of six members, three from each chamber (two from the majority caucus and one from the minority caucus) will meet after the Legislative Leadership and Governor have agreed to budget targets for each of the budgets. Legislative leaders are still optimistic that the budgets can be passed before the summer recess schedule to begin just before the July 4<sup>th</sup> holiday.

### **Department of Education Budget Passes House**

On Thursday, the House approved the Department of Education budget. The budget comes in higher than the current year appropriation by \$4.2 million to a total of \$95.7 million. The increase is in line with the Governor's recommendation and slightly higher than the Senate recommendation.

### **K-12 Budget Moving...But Slowly**

A budget that passed out of committee but was not acted upon by the full House was the K-12 budget. Discussions began but a vote was never taken on Thursday. The House version comes in at \$13.4 billion and includes a \$114.8 million increase in foundation allowances to schools. The per pupil foundation grant funding formula will give every district an increase of at least \$55 per pupil to as high as \$110 per pupil.

The budget does contain increased funding for early education, including \$5 million for maintenance and expansion of Great Start Collaboratives (Sec. 32b); \$1.5 million for a new program to create innovative programs that can be replicated statewide and focus on improving the quality of early learning settings (Sec. 32h); and increases funding for the Great Start Readiness Program by a total of \$27,457,900 to allow over 7000 more children an opportunity to attend pre-school.

The Great Start Readiness Program (currently named the Michigan School Readiness Program) is split between grants to school districts (Sec. 32d) and competitive grants (Sec. 32i) to non-district pre-school programs. The House version increases district grants funding by \$25 million for at total of \$106.2 million to increase the number of four year olds served. This increase would allow 6470 more children to attend pre-school and would raise the per pupil amount from \$3400 to \$3500. The House version also increases funding for the competitive grants by \$2.4 million to approximately \$15.1 million to serve an additional 588 children and increase the per pupil amount form \$3,400 to \$3,500.

The budget contains several other early childhood increases including an additional \$2.5 million in grants for community collaboratives in the 0-3 secondary prevention program. The budget would also appropriate \$2 million for a new foreign language immersion grant program for districts with Great Start Readiness programs to receive \$500 per pupil to start new language immersion programs.

The bill also contains provisions on full-day kindergarten, such that any schools that have not implemented full-day kindergarten by 2009-2010 will not receive full foundation funding allowances.

The budget contains \$32 million for the Governor's proposed 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Fund for start-up and facilities grants to districts to establish smaller high schools. It contains \$2 million increased funding for adolescent health centers. The House version increases special education payment funding by \$33.5 million to \$1 billion to reflect estimated costs associated with educating special education students.

The budget has is raised the ire of Republicans who believe it would be irresponsible to pass a budget that is over \$30 million higher than estimated revenues. Republican members abstained from voting in committee.

## **Report Shows Michigan in Top Ranks for Child Healthcare**

According to a recently released report by the Commonwealth Fund, Michigan is a national leader for providing access to healthcare to children (3<sup>rd</sup>) and on overall child healthcare measures (13<sup>th</sup>). The state has the lowest rate of uninsured children at 5.2%.

## **New Research Findings Support Early Childhood Investment**

Yet another analysis of early childhood education programs concludes that investments in early childhood education, care and development payoff well into adulthood. Arthur J. Reynolds, a child-development professor at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities has determined that a Chicago experiment that took place more than 20 years ago is returning almost \$10 for every \$1 invested by the time the child reached 25.

The Chicago study stands out from other well known early childhood programs like the Perry Pre-School Project because it was operated by a public school system and thus more likely to be applied across the board. The Chicago Longitudinal Study originally included 1,539 children from low-income families and took place at 25 sites in the city.

## **Special Education Oversight Bill Moves**

On Tuesday, the House Education Committee reported out a bill (HB 5323) that would restore administrative and rule making power to the State Board of Education regarding special education in Michigan. The Board previously had these responsibilities before 1996 when Governor John Engler gave them to the state superintendent.

Proponents of the legislation say the move would provide more accountability to residents. Only Representative Glenn Steil Jr. voted no on the measure. He questioned if the bill was simply an attempt by those who disagreed with the superintendent to get their way.

## **Recall Efforts Virtually Dead**

The last recall attempt still active was dealt an all but certain death when the Secretary of State officially ruled on Thursday that the petitions submitted to recall House Speaker Andy Dillon (D-Redford Township) had not collected enough valid signatures. The Secretary of State ruled that almost half of the submitted signatures were not valid. That left the petition effort 776 signatures short of the required 8,724 to place the issue before the voters.

The head of the recall efforts across the state, Leon Drolet of Michigan Taxpayers Alliance, vowed to go to court to get the recall effort back on track, but most political pundits do not believe he will be successful or be able to do anything in time for a recall election to occur.