



ALLIANCE LEGISLATIVE REPORT (99-10)

ACTION NEEDED ON SCHOOL DISCIPLINE BILL

The Senate Education Committee Tuesday approved a bill that would make significant changes to student suspension and expulsion procedures and require school districts to implement comprehensive new policies. **SB 100 (Lightford, D-Maywood)** was sent out of the Committee on a 9-5 vote. The Alliance, the only education organization to oppose the bill, testified at the hearing and requested an amendment that would ensure a safe learning environment in Illinois schools.

School board members and administrators are urged to contact their State Senator and urge a “no” vote on SB 100 unless further amendments are made to the bill.

Discussions on the components of the bill have been ongoing for more than a year. The Alliance, which opposed the bill from the beginning, had been working with the bill’s sponsor and proponents searching for compromise through last summer and fall. However, the final version contained in Senate Amendment #1 to SB 100, still contains troublesome provisions and the Alliance maintained its position of opposition.

Most importantly, the Alliance seeks to add that suspensions and expulsions should address incidents in cases where presence in school would disrupt, impede, or interfere with the operation of the school.

Components of the bill include:

- For student expulsions, requires school boards to include in a written expulsion decision specific reasons why expulsion is in the best interest of the school and rationale as to the specific duration of the expulsion
- Prohibits “zero tolerance” discipline policies
- Limits student suspensions of three days or less only in cases where the student’s continuing presence in school would pose a threat to school safety or a disruption to other students’ learning opportunities
- Limits student suspensions of longer than three days, expulsions, and removals to alternative schools only to cases where the student’s continuing presence in school poses a threat to the safety of other students or staff and only after other appropriate and available behavioral and disciplinary interventions have been exhausted (these must be documented)
- Requires that for students suspended for longer than four days, they must be provided appropriate and available support services during the period of their suspension
- Requires school districts to create a policy to facilitate the re-engagement of students who are suspended or expelled
- Requires school districts to create a policy by which suspended students shall have the opportunity to make up work for equivalent academic credit

The entire text of the amendment to SB 100 can be found at:

<http://ilga.gov/legislation/fulltext.asp?DocName=09900SB0100sam001&GA=99&SessionId=88&DocTypeId=SB&LegID=83402&DocNum=100&GAID=13&Session=>

WILL SCHOOL DISTRICTS SEE MID-YEAR BUDGET CUTS?

Discussions continue in the Capitol among lawmakers, legislative leaders, and the Governor's office regarding the budget deficit that exists for the remainder of Fiscal Year 2015. When the income tax rates dropped on January 1st, the resulting loss in State revenues has left the State short of the funds necessary to pay for the programs put in place for the current budget. Behind the scenes discussions are investigating possible mid-year cuts in the State budget.

Though no agreement has been reached among the policy-makers, elementary and secondary education could be on the chopping block. There has been a question for a while whether school districts would receive the final mandated categorical grant payments this fiscal year. Worse, there is speculation that school districts might not receive their final two – or four – General State Aid (GSA) payments this fiscal year. Funds have already been budgeted and committed to pay for salaries and services for the remainder of the year and, if GSA payments are withheld mid-year, there is virtually no way for schools to cut expenses at this point.

Again, nothing has been decided yet by the Governor and legislative leaders, but it is a good time to contact legislators and explain what GSA payments mean to local school districts. More specifically, the local consequences if GSA payments are not made as promised.

This legislative report was written and edited by the lobbyists of the Illinois Association of School Boards to provide information to the members of the organizations that comprise the Statewide School Management Alliance.

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