



THE EARLY CHILDHOOD INVESTMENT CORPORATION

CAPITOL

CORNER

## STATE UPDATE

Friday, November 13, 2009

**Matt Gillard**

[mgillard@ecic4kids.org](mailto:mgillard@ecic4kids.org)

Legislative activity was once again incredibly light this week as both chambers took Wednesday off in observance of Veteran's Day. Both the Senate and House Education Policy committees held hearings regarding reforms the Legislature will have to enact in order for Michigan to be competitive in the federal "Race to the Top" grant program. State Superintendent of Schools Mike Flanagan testified in the House committee that the Legislature will need to go above and beyond the minimum requirements laid out by the U.S. Department of Education in order to have any chance of being successful in the highly competitive process. Flanagan also testified that these reforms will be required in the future in order for the state to receive any federal education dollars, so it makes sense for the Legislature to enact them now, with the possibility of a substantial reward.

These reforms are controversial, as the teacher unions and school administration organizations oppose various aspects of them, but the potential of up to \$600 million for education funding in Michigan is certainly enticing. Look for more on this topic in the weeks to come.

The Senate failed to act on the supplemental School Aid funding bill, HB 4860, that was passed by the House last week. Public pressure to address the cuts to school funding appears to be growing as the impact of the cuts is starting to be felt in local school districts. There were large contingents of public school advocates at the Capitol on both Tuesday and Thursday demanding action from their local legislators. Despite this, the Senate Republicans and Majority Leader Mike Bishop did not feel compelled to either raise new revenues or agree to the House plan to use available federal stimulus dollars to reduce the pro-ration cut of \$127 per pupil that will take effect on November 21<sup>st</sup>. Both the House and Senate have scheduled a tentative session day for next Wednesday, November 18<sup>th</sup>, but it is unlikely either chamber will actually convene. With the Legislature likely off until the first week of December, public outrage over their inability to resolve the school funding issue will continue to build. It is imperative that we



powered by the  
Early Childhood  
Investment Corporation  
and Michigan's Great Start Collaboratives

517.371.9000 phone

517.371.9080 fax

221 N. Pine - Lansing, MI 48933

[www.ecic4kids.org](http://www.ecic4kids.org)

work to include support for early childhood program funding into this debate as well.

**NOVEMBER 11, 2009**

Jennifer Castagna  
[jcastagna@wpllc.net](mailto:jcastagna@wpllc.net)

The following memo provides a summary of recent developments in public policy issues of interest to Early Childhood Advocates.

---

### **Healthcare Reform**

Late on Saturday evening, the House passed H.R. 3962, the *Affordable Health Care for America Act*, by a vote of 220-215. House Democratic leaders celebrated after a long week that had House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) working hard to corral votes in favor of the legislation. At times it appeared like a giant game of whack-a-mole—as soon as one faction signed on, another found a reason to be disagreeable. In the end, the House passed the bill after adopting an amendment banning the public plan from covering abortions and prohibiting insurance companies who participate in the new health exchanges from offering abortion coverage.

Early childhood advocates can also celebrate. The *Affordable Health Care for America Act* as passed by the House includes \$750 million over five years for a new voluntary home visitation program.

Following passage, President Obama thanked the House and said that he hopes the Senate will now take action. However, the outlook for Senate consideration of health care reform legislation remains more precarious with a final bill yet to be introduced. Senate Majority Leader Reid (D-NV) announced this week his desire to begin debate on a “motion to proceed” to a healthcare overhaul bill next week, but that an actual vote on the motion might not occur until after Thanksgiving. This would push back the possibility of final passage of a bill to later this year or early next year. But first, Reid needs a final “score” from the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), which it not expected until late this week at best. Additionally, it is being reported that even as Reid seeks 60 votes to move forward on a health care bill with a public option that states can opt-out of that he has allowed Sen. Thomas Carper (D-DE) to work on an alternative proposal.

This is also not good news for early childhood advocates who are anxious to see the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee introduce and mark-up a reconciliation bill that has already been adopted by the House and includes funding for a new Early Learning Challenge Fund.

## **Budget and Appropriations**

After several weeks of discord, the Senate adopted its version of a spending plan for the Departments of Commerce, Justice and Science last week and moved to consideration of the Military Construction and Veteran Affairs spending bill. That leaves conference reports on Defense and Transportation and Housing unfinished. No plans for Senate floor action have been announced for Financial Services, Foreign Operations or Labor, Health and Human Services and Education, making them the likely candidates for a “minibus” spending bill.

House Appropriations Chairman David Obey (D-WI) and his Senate counterpart, Chairman Daniel Inouye (D-HI), continue to pressure staff negotiating the minibus bill to complete their work by November 13, hoping that the House can take up the measure on November 16. If that plan holds, the final piece of the FY 2010 budget would reach the President’s desk just before Thanksgiving. It would be nice to be thankful for something from the Congress.

## **Literacy Bills Introduced**

On November 5, Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) announced the introduction of S. 2740, *The Literacy Education for All, Results for the Nation (LEARN) Act*, a bill that proposes funding for comprehensive literacy programs in states across the country. The LEARN Act authorizes \$2.35 billion to support state and local literacy programs to ensure that children from birth through grade 12 have the reading and writing skills necessary for success in school and beyond. The bill incorporates principles from the Striving Readers federal adolescent literacy program, and it makes reforms and improvements to K-3 and early literacy programs. “Literacy must be education priority number one,” said Senator Murray, “It’s the building block that keeps students engaged in school and on track to college and a successful career.” The grant funding will be used to provide high-quality professional development that would prepare teachers to improve literacy instruction specific to grade level; analyze data to improve student learning; fund assessments of student progress; effectively implement literacy intervention strategies; and enhance coordination across districts and states, as well as grade levels. Of specific interest to early childhood advocates are provisions in support of family literacy services and programs.

Additionally, Representatives John Yarmuth (D-KY) and Jared Polis (D-CO) introduced their version of the *LEARN Act*, H.R. 4037, on November 6. While there is some variation from its Senate counterpart, the overall purpose of H.R. 4037 remains the same. The goal of this legislation is to establish a comprehensive literacy program for children from birth through grade 12 to ensure that students have the reading and writing skills necessary to graduate and to succeed in post secondary education and career options. For additional

information, visit <http://murray.senate.gov/education/LEARNact.pdf> or <http://polis.house.gov/News/DocumentSingle.aspx?DocumentID=153215>

### **National Center for Research on Early Childhood Education Hosts Symposium on Dual Language Learners**

Last week, the National Center for Research on Early Childhood Education, which is based at the University of Virginia, hosted a day-long symposium titled, "Investigating the Classroom Experiences of Young Dual Language Learners." The briefing brought together leading early childhood researchers to examine evidence of what works in pre-K classrooms and to explore the question: How do we help young children in the United States who know very little English? Recent studies have shown that dual-language programs – roughly defined as programs in which teachers give half of their instruction in a child's home language and half in English – are effective at improving the school readiness of young children for whom English is a second language. According to reports, the symposium brought to light that there is still vast uncharted territory for researchers to determine exactly what that these programs should look like in practice, what kinds of skills teachers need to teach dual-language learners, and what policies should be enacted. Researchers at the symposium did agree that no matter what a child's language background there is evidence that 3- and 4-year-old children benefit from teachers who converse with them, ask them about what they are seeing or doing, and respond to and elaborate on their questions.

### **NAEYC Releases Content Standards**

Recently, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) released its revised edition of the *Standards for Early Childhood Professional Preparation Programs*, which is the position statement from which higher education degree accreditation is based. At colleges and universities the standards apply to associate, baccalaureate, and graduate degree programs. Students at each level of professional preparation are expected to demonstrate varying degrees of knowledge and skills, as appropriate to the program level. The Early Childhood Professional Preparation Standards include:

- 1.Promoting Child Development and Learning;
- 2.Building Family and Community Relationships;
- 3.Observing, Documenting, and Assessing to Support Young Children and Families;
- 4.Using Developmentally Effective Approaches to Connect with Children and Families;
- 5.Using Content Knowledge to Build Meaningful Curriculum; and
- 6.Becoming a Professional.

The most significant revision is that all degree-awarding institutions seeking early childhood accreditation will need to meet an additional standard focused

specifically on content knowledge. In the past, content knowledge and training on using developmentally effective teaching approaches had been one combined standard. This increases the total number of standards from five to six. The NAEYC Commission on Early Childhood Associate Degree Accreditation and the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education will have the opportunity to review and approve the standards in the fall of 2010. Revisions to accreditation materials will take place in 2011, after which higher education programs will be expected to meet the new standards.