

April 15, 2015

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- **2015 Session Highlights in Brief**

Budget Update

On the final day of session, the General Assembly passed the state operating budget for the fiscal year 2016 and the 2015-2016 school year. The final State Budget was adopted following slightly more than a week of protracted negotiations between the Governor's office, the Speaker of the House and President of the Senate, and members assigned to the conference committee. The final budget includes full funding for the Geographic Cost of Education Index (GCEI) and other priorities for the legislature, such as restoring the 2% raise for state employees. However, even though the state budget becomes law without the Governor's signature and is not able to be vetoed, the designation of this increased funding is at the Governor's discretion. He stated on Monday that he would not do so.

MABE and other education advocates are urging the Governor to release the \$68.1 million in GCEI funding to fully fund this \$136.2 million program. We are hopeful that the Governor agrees to in the coming days to fulfill this portion of state funding. Importantly, no other education funding is in jeopardy, including the restoration of more than \$74 million based on the inflation factor and the 50% in GCEI funding included in the Governor's budget. However, 13 local boards and county governments are impacted by GCEI cuts and urgently need action to release these funds in order to finalize local negotiations on their 2015-2016 school year budgets.

The 13 counties relying on restored GCEI funding are: Baltimore City, and Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Calvert, Carroll, Charles, Frederick, Howard, Kent, Montgomery, Prince George's, Queen Anne's, and St. Mary's counties.

One intriguing pressure point is the passage of SB 183 which incentivizes the Governor to fully fund GCEI this year in exchange for not being mandated to do so in the future.

Stay tuned for updates and Calls to Action on advocacy efforts to urge the Governor to restore full funding for public school.

Legislative Committee Calendar

April 27, 2015 – Session Wrap-up

MABE's Legislative Committee meetings are held in the MABE office on Monday mornings, 10:00 to 12:00, unless otherwise indicated. Meeting agendas and materials are posted on the [MABE website](#).

Public Charter School Improvement Act

On the final day of session, the Public Charter School Improvement Act, [Senate Bill 595](#), passed by votes of 44-1 in the Senate and 131-7 in the House and now awaits the Governor's signature. Final passage followed intensive deliberations and consideration of a comprehensive re-writing of the bill through amendments adopted by the Senate Education Committee, and a few amendments adopted near the end of session in the House Ways and Means Committee.

As introduced, MABE strongly opposed the Charter School Improvement and Expansion Act. MABE lobbied as a member of a broad coalition of public education advocates in support of local board authority to approve charter schools, maintaining requirements that charter schools have highly qualified teachers and principals, and preserving a workable definition and methodology for determining commensurate funding amounts for public charter schools. MABE opposed the Charter School Expansion Act because it would weaken or eliminate all of these standards and accountability measures. Fortunately, this was no longer the case following substantial amendments adopted in the Senate, and the bill was further improved by amendments adopted in the House.

Bills Passed

[SB 595](#) - The Charter School Improvement Act

[SB 497/HB 452](#) – Commission on Assessments in Public Schools

[SB 15/HB 278](#) – Task Force on Implementation of a Dyslexia Education Program

[SB 538/HB 535](#) – Blind and Visually Impaired Assessment Mandate

[SB 508/HB 642](#) – Background Checks for School Contractors

[SB 334/HB 965](#) – Hunger Free School Act

[HB 298](#) – Student Data Privacy Act

[SB 251/HB 947](#) - School Counselor Certification Renewal Requirement

[SB 403/HB375](#) - Education - Maryland Council on Advancement of School-Based Health Centers

[HB 1032](#) – Retired Law Enforcement Officer Right to Carry on School Property

[SB 695/HB 755](#) – Public Information Act Provisions

The Operating Budget: [HB 70](#) – State Budget; [HB 72](#) – Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act; and [SB 183](#) – Geographic Cost of Education Index – Fund in 2016 or Mandate in Future.

The Capital Budget, including School Construction: [HB 71](#); and [HB 110](#) – Qualified Zone Academy Bonds.

Bills which did NOT pass:

Special Education - Burden of Proof Shift ([SB 390/HB 344](#))

Special Education - Translations of IEPs ([SB 314/HB 44](#))

Maryland Education Credit ([SB 405/HB 487](#))

Maintenance of Effort - Alteration and Study ([SB 627/HB1079](#))

Maintenance of Effort - Financial Advisory Board ([HB 502](#))

Post-Labor Day School Year Start Date ([SB 455/HB 389](#))

Orange Ribbon for Healthy School Hours ([HB 1081](#))

Student Diabetes Management Program ([SB 496/HB 672](#))

Sexual Abuse and Assault Awareness and Prevention Program ([SB 489/HB 383](#))

Sexual Abuse and Assault Notification Requirements ([HB 1033](#))