

# ALLIANCE FOR HIGH QUALITY EDUCATION LEGISLATIVE/SYSTEMS IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE

February 7, 2020

9:30 A.M.

## MEETING SUMMARY

***In attendance on phone conference:*** Adam Fineske, Andy Culp, Beth Weber, Bill Wade, Brian Wilson, Christine Poetter, David Chambers, Fred Bolden, Greg Gurka, James Fritz, Jenni Logan, Jonathan Cooper, Lynn Campbell, Mark Gleichauf, Matt Montgomery, Matt Muccio, Mike Sawyers, Michael Tefs, Mike Zalar, Phillip Herman, Renee Willis, Tim Pickana, Todd Puster, Tom Evans, Jessica Voltolini, and Tony Podojil

Tony Podojil convened the meeting by phone conference at 9:30 a.m. The primary focus of the meeting was to update the committee on the EdChoice Scholarship Program.

### **I. Current Political Landscape/Legislative Initiatives.**

#### **A. Ed Choice - Update**

Tony and Jessica provided the committee with an update on the status of the legislative activity related to the EdChoice Program that is occurring in both the House and the Senate. The Senate had passed its version of a possible fix in HB9 and the House has developed its own version of a fix in SB89. HB9 currently sits in conference committee and SB89, while passed out of the House, has still not been addressed in the Senate as of February 7<sup>th</sup>.

While there are some similarities in both approaches, the House version goes much farther in terms of structural changes by eliminating the traditional EdChoice scholarship program which is performance-based and shifting voucher eligibility to a statewide approach based on poverty (rebranding and expanding the EdChoice Expansion scholarship program). The Senate version, as was discussed previously, basically changes the criteria for building eligibility for the performance-based program to include only buildings graded “D” or “F” with some “C” buildings qualifying based on achieved criteria (lowest 10% of PI statewide) while maintaining both the ed expansion and poverty-based approaches.

Jessica shared that there is a noticeable level of animosity between the chambers that is making it difficult to find a remedy both chambers can agree with. At present, there is not a clear path and timeframe being proposed by either side that would result in an agreed upon final solution.

Members suggested that we should continue to seek a short-term fix that addresses the immediate issue related to building eligibility while also addressing concerns related to how these programs are to be funded in the future and the lack of fiscal and academic accountability associated with EdChoice schools. There is a real concern that future funding needs will be addressed by moving money away from public schools to the EdChoice programs without adding additional funds to the overall school foundation program.

Members on the call suggested to focus on the following goals:

- Reduce the number of buildings on the eligibility list to the lowest number possible and/or totally eliminate the failing schools criteria.
- Continue efforts to promote our fair funding amendment that would provide an equal playing field related to foundation formula funding at least at the same levels of the parochial and private schools receiving state funding.
- Insist that all schools, both public and non-public be held to the same level of accountability standards (academic and fiscal).

## **II. Legislative Strategies.**

Jessica and Tony shared that they have been in discussions with the ed organizations and the other stakeholder groups in an attempt to determine where everyone stands and begin to discuss a possible solution to move this issue forward. There is a general concern that we are going to find ourselves in the same position we were in at the end of January without any clear agreement between the chambers by April 1, 2020. As we receive updates we will continue to reach out to members and the committee to keep everyone informed and to seek input.

## **IV. Next Meeting.**

The next meeting will be **February 19, 2020 at 9:30 AM by phone conference.**

The meeting adjourned at 10:25 a.m.