

**ALLIANCE FOR HIGH QUALITY EDUCATION  
COVID-19 Committee  
Conference Call**

**June 10, 2020  
10:00 A.M.**

**MEETING SUMMARY**

*In attendance on phone conference:* Jessica Voltolini, Tony Podojil, and member representatives from 52 school districts.

Tony Podojil convened the meeting by phone conference at 10:00 a.m.

**ODE Stakeholder Call – Update**

**Reset & Restart-Education Planning Guide for Ohio Schools and Districts**

- Issue – Health Requirements Release
- Mask, Transportation, Cleaning Requirements

ODE and ODH are still not ready to release the final version of the Reset and Restart Planning Guide. ODE is going to separate their guidance from the health requirements piece. The Department of Health is making modifications to the health requirements based on the feedback from the conversations with the group of superintendents that met with the Governor last week and should have that ready in about two weeks although a specific date has not been set.

Q. It's difficult to take the next step without knowing if we are going to maintain physical distancing requirements of 6 feet, it's difficult to do a plan of any kind, any thoughts around that requirement?

A. There has been more conversation with respect to the six feet social distancing, but it is not likely to change unless it is on a school bus. We have been asking to get at least two students per seat on the school bus, wearing mask.

Q. I want to make a comment to those folks that are in the transportation task force, not only is there an economic perspective but there's also a safety issue that should be brought up and that the safest transportation that we're aware of across the United States, the least amount of accidents for fatalities for kids is on a school bus. Can we remind the legislators and the governor's office that buses truly are the safest way and when decreasing their capacity, you put more individual autos on the road?

A. Yes, another part of that argument is that if we put less students on a bus, we put more parents or teenage siblings driving on the streets either getting their younger siblings to school or themselves.

Q. Do you know anything about the interaction between the Big 8 and the Health and Safety Coalition document that was released yesterday and what is going on? How do those two work together or is this just completely independent?

A. It is my understanding that this is separate, I do not know that they have been working directly with the Department of Health or the governor's office. We will update as we know more and ask for feedback.

## **Preschool**

We have been trying to get clarity for school districts that operate early childhood programs to see what they can anticipate for the fall and what the requirements are for the health and safety restrictions. Yesterday at the State Board of Education meeting the board passed a resolution to adopt emergency rule to align the health and safety guidelines for ODJFS and the publicly funded childcare program to the preschool programs that school districts provide. A copy of the resolution is attached but it is our understanding that the ratio requirements that were included in the Department of Health's health and safety guidelines for childcare will now apply to your district's programs.

Q. I think the issue must be communicated to the Governor that if we cannot operate these programs, parents do not have a place to safely send their children and therefore cannot become part of the labor force.

A. That is probably the argument that is going to win the day of this argument. Once the board resolution is signed I will get a copy of the rules and circulate more information later this week with the best contacts for you to reach out to directly to indicate your concerns to the governor's office.

## **Legislative Planning**

- SB319 and SB320

Yesterday SB319 was up for hearing, the Alliance and other education organizations offered testimony. We focused on employee evaluation changes, furloughing concept, and licensure flexibility. Licensure was not in the original bill and we hope it is going in today as an amendment. There is a lack of understanding of what furloughing is and the unions are pushing hard against adding that in.

The second hearing on SB319 is today at 11:15. They are hearing opponent testimony and will be accepting amendment today, will pass a bill out of the Senate Education Committee today and the Senate floor this week. It is very time sensitive. The legislature is only going to be in session this week and maybe a few days next week. Anything that is going to happen before next school year needs to happen today or tomorrow.

The Alliance is supportive of the majority of the provisions in 319 but we have asked for an amendment that would grant temporary license flexibility for next school year so superintendents can reassign educators to teach outside of their license and subject areas. We have also asked for an amendment that clarifies the furlough language as drafted in the introduced version of the bill to ensure that it applies to not just certificated staff but also classified staff. The point that we made in the conversations we've had is in lieu of doing a reduction in force (layoffs), it would be much more helpful to have the authority to furlough staff for a couple days to save money rather than having their employment suspended.

SB320 has its first hearing today which takes the authority away from the director of health or any other public official to dictate what health and safety guidelines would apply to school district with respect to reopening. It would essentially let school districts make local decisions. It also has a piece in the bill about parents picking buildings on parental instruction I think that only applies to homeschooling, so we asked for clarity around those provisions.

Q. Why wouldn't they think we are requesting at least the same furloughing ability at the state level to help them with the anticipated budget crunch as well to help the districts?

A. We made the point that we are the only public entity that does not have the ability to furlough and that we are just asking for the same as all other public bodies but for just this school year. We may have to revisit this in the future.

Q. I guess my part of my frustration would be what is the thinking behind the local control with respect to health and safety measures?

A. The Alliance advocates for local control with respect to education decision making. I think it puts districts in a tough spot to determine what health and safety guidelines are going to put in place to reopen schools independent of any Department of Health guidance and 320 as drafted does not have protection against liability. We would like to have those decisions done as a partnership as done in other industries.

Q. Jessica can you remind me again as this process unfolds, when you think the guidelines the Governor's is working on and when is the date you anticipate or project that this is going to be complete?

A. By the end of the month

Q. Our administrative teams across most of the school districts on this call are gone in July.

A. Hopefully, it's the week of the 22nd but we are asking them to get it out as soon as possible because we must talk to our teachers, their support staff, and others during July.

## **Budget**

- Reductions to FY20 Budget – Amendment

We are in constant contact with Senator Dolan's office. He is still committed to get his amendment for the funding placed somewhere before they leave. It did not get through the House last week, we were disappointed. We are hoping that happened today and gets signed by the governor this week

### ***Next Conference Call:***

The next call will be **June 16, 2020, at 10 AM by phone conference.**

The meeting adjourned at 11:02 a.m.