

Legislative/Systems Improvement Committee

Zoom Meeting for all members

Wednesday, September 15, 2021

10:00 A.M.

MEETING SUMMARY

In attendance on phone conference: Tony Podojil, Jessica Voltolini, and member representatives from 56 school districts.

Tony Podojil convened the meeting at 10:00 a.m. The primary focus of the meeting was to receive feedback from Alliance members regarding vaccinations, mask and quarantine, online learning, remote meetings, open enrollment, property valuation challenges, financial literacy, and House Bill 322/HB327.

I. Current Political Landscape/ Legislative Initiatives.

A. COVID Issues

- a. Masks and Quarantine—DOH Guidance
- b. Vaccination Legislation
- c. Hybrid/Online Learning and HB 110 Implementation
- d. Remote Meetings

B. Open Enrollment

- a. Status of legislation
- b. 9/22 Meeting with Fordham
- c. Blended learning plans

C. Property Valuation Challenges

D. SB 1 Financial Literacy

E. CRT/DEI

- a. Status of HB 322/HB327
- b. What will the Senate do?

F. State Superintendent Search/ODE/SBOE

- a. Timeline

Q. Can we clarify the information surrounding mask and quarantine?

A. Two weeks ago, Jessica, Tony, and about 15 superintendents held a meeting with the Governor, and Dr. Vanderhoff, to express that the current guidance provided needed to be clarified. Updated documents were sent out around Labor Day, but it didn't provide the clarity we were looking for nor the coordination with the individual health districts that are implementing the policy. Jessica suggested that a sub-group of the Alliance get together to discuss and present to the Governor what issues need more clarification including those that met with the Governor previously.

A Senate bill and a House Bill that were introduced to keep schools from issuing a mask mandate have had no hearings at this point. The legislature may decide to consider mask mandate legislation when they return next week.

Q. What are the updates surrounding vaccination?

A. HB248 had two hearings in the House before summer recess. The Speaker of the House has said this bill is not moving forward. However, the Speaker and the House leadership team are meeting to introduce a new vaccination bill by the end of the month. President Biden's order has nothing to do with

regulating vaccines for the same population of people. The bill introduced by the House Leadership team will be the vehicle that the House will use to move vaccination rules. There are concerns with respect to some of the State institutions of Higher Education and their decisions to require vaccination and what should or should not be required from a business perspective. Jessica will update on this topic as it unfolds.

Q. What is the permanent approval of Pfizer for ages 16 and over? For students under the age of 16 does the district decide as to who to quarantine?

A. Yes, it would be based on the age. The district would decide on if to quarantine, how many, and for the length of time. Jessica recommends checking with the legal counsel of each district to clarify until further notice.

Q. Does HB606 expire at the end of September? What does that mean? Can it be extended?

A. Yes, it expires. It has to do with immunity for districts related to decisions dealing with COVID and Jessica doesn't believe it will be extended before the last week of September. It is possible they will look at it and extend it but not before the expiration date. Current law may already provide districts with the protections they are seeking. This is a question we can have addressed by legal.

Q. What other flexibility needs to be extended for this school year because of COVID?

A. ODE is still accepting blended plans even though the deadline has past (July 1st). SB229 was sent out yesterday to our members, it would extend the July date to April 30th.

Q. Will the legislature extend the ability to meet remotely, as in the school board meetings?

A. Jessica doubts that will be extended but we can ask if it is needed. Our districts feel due to some quarantine issues an extension could be a good option.

Q. Can you provide information on the open enrollment issues?

A. There is a series of articles in the Columbus Dispatch around open enrollment that were related to a study that Fordham had done in January. Fordham and the CCV (Center for Christian Virtue) are working on potential stand-alone legislation that would require open enrollment in all districts. There is no language yet and a bill has not been officially introduced. Tony was invited to an interview session on The Columbus PBS station with Fordham to discuss open enrollment and the report issued by Fordham. It is our impression that there may be confusion from those that are advocating for open enrollment with respect to funding, believing that funding would remain under the old rules. Tony and Jessica have a meeting next week with Fordham. Following this meeting, Jessica will send out talking points on this to our members and will update our members as this unfolds.

Q. Can you update us on CRT? Diversity and inclusion?

A. There has not been any activity on this since the legislative summer recess. The Senate is interested in doing something but is waiting to see what the House sends to them. There will be more to come on this topic.

Jeff Brown and Trent Bowers along with Tony and Jessica met with Lisa Grey at Ohio Excels to see if we can find some common ground in terms of how to address the issues CRT are causing related to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion efforts in districts. These are also concerns for many in the business community. More to follow.

Q. Do you know what is going on with property valuation changes?

A. There was a property value challenge in Lorain County based on the tax status of greenhouse facilities. Green Circle Growers challenged that the greenhouse warehouse should be taxed as personal

property rather than as real estate. Green Circle Growers won its case, the appeal in Federal court was denied and the Supreme Court refused to hear it. As a result, not only did Green Circle Growers see their property tax bill reduced Firelands Local Schools was ordered to rebate them 4 million in overpayments. The concern now is who else would want to challenge real vs. personal property based on this case. We are working with the education organizations on a collective response and strategy going forward.

Q. *Is this the Merrin Bill challenging property value that was discussed last spring?*

A. No. This bill passed the House prior to summer recess. First hearings were heard yesterday, where Rep. Merrin gave sponsor testimony in the Senate. Jessica needs to meet with the Senate Committee Chair, senate members, and other educational organizations to discuss strategy on this. An update will be given at our next meeting.

Q. *Is there an update on SBI?*

A. This is the financial literacy bill that did not pass before summer break. It is still pending in the House Education Committee which is supportive of moving the bill within the next couple weeks. Jessica will keep members updated.

State Superintendent Search Update: With respect to the State Superintendent search, the State Board meets on Monday and Tuesday next week and is expected to finalize the RFP to hire a search firm to begin the selection process. This will probably be a lengthy process and Jessica will update as information unfolds.

The Alliance's Executive Committee will meet to discuss the characteristics that they would like to see in the next State Superintendent at its meeting next week.

Redistricting Legislation: Two bills were introduced, one in the Senate and one in the House that would restructure the state board due to the legislatures discomfort referencing issues from the past year. These bills, in Jessica's opinion will be put on hold due to the search in process. Andy Brenner and Gail Manning will be involved in the search process.

II. Next Steps:

A. Fall 2021

We will have a discussion during the next meeting on Redistricting and what is being considered in the Senate Education Committee, and the House Education Committee.

III. Next Meeting.

The next meeting will be held October 20, 2021, at 10 a.m.

The meeting adjourned at 11:05 a.m.