

Education Committees Advance Key Bills – The Senate Education Committee advanced a standout measure in terms of potential changes affecting local budgets and programs.

SB 1143 (Liu) Pupil Instruction: Independent Study – The bill implements a number of reforms proposed by the Governor in his January Budget proposal. As amended in committee, the bill makes the following changes to current Independent Study (IS) law:

- Eliminates the requirement that a supervising teachers sign and date student work samples as a condition of apportionment
- Requires IS pupil/teacher ratios be calculated by LCFF grade spans (K-3, 4-6, 7-8, 9-12) and allows for alternative ratios through a local collectively bargained agreement
- Creates a new “course-based” IS option that allows LEAs to convert entire courses into seat-time (rather than assignments) so long as teachers have live weekly contact with students to determine if they are making “satisfactory educational progress”
- Allows IS master agreements to be up to one-year in length (an increase from the current one semester limitation)

The bill was amended in committee to remove provisions that created a new “site-based blended learning” IS option and provisions that would have deemed, for the purposes of charter school funding, that the new IS option was considered classroom-based instruction. The bill had broad support from the education community and passed to the Appropriations Committee with an unanimous, bi-partisan vote of 7-0 (two Senators were absent).

Additional reading – here is the LAO analysis of Governor’s Independent Study reform

proposal: <http://www.lao.ca.gov/handouts/education/2014/Independent-Study-042214.pdf>

The Assembly Education Committee also heard two bills that were very recently gutted and amended to impose new requirements on LEAs. A summary of those two bills follows:

AB 1442 (Gatto) Pupil records: social media – This bill was very recently amended to establish new requirements for LEAs that adopt a program to gather or maintain in its records, any personal information obtained from the social media of any enrolled pupil.

Under this bill, LEAs that consider a program to gather or maintain such information would be required to notify the pupils and parents or guardians about the proposed program, and provide an opportunity for public comment before adoption of the program. LEAs would not be allowed to gather any information that is not publicly accessible, and would be responsible for destroying the information within one year of the pupil turning 18 years of age, or within one year of the pupil no longer being enrolled in the LEA, whichever comes first.

The bill passed out of committee on a bipartisan 7-0 vote.

AB 2706 (R. Hernandez) Schools: health care coverage: enrollment assistance – This recently amended bill will require, commencing with the 2015-16 school year, a public school to add a form to its enrollment forms, or amend existing enrollment forms, to include a section that offers the parent or legal guardian of a pupil the option of being connected to specified individuals or entities for the purpose of providing information regarding health care coverage options and enrollment assistance.

The bill received a split-party 5-1-1 vote, with the Chair, Assembly Member Joan Buchanan, abstaining. Assembly Member Kristin Olsen, a republican and Vice Chair of the committee, voted yes while Assembly Member Rocky Chavez, also a republican, voted no. The bill has been double-referred to the Assembly Health Committee, and will be heard this week. Several members that voted to support the bill in the education committee made it clear that they will reexamine the bill if it reaches the Assembly Floor – giving the clear signal they want a less controversial bill by the time they have to act on it again. We're working with the author's office on this measure.

The Education Committees will meet next week (April 30) for the last time before the deadline for all bills with a fiscal impact to move out of policy committees. We expect that hearing to be lengthy. We will keep you posted.