Good Monday Morning! At the conclusion of this message please find the June 28, 2021 Federal Advocacy & Public Policy Update. If you have any questions about the matters addressed in today's report, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Have a great week and thank you for all you do on behalf of public education in the Commonwealth!

Best,

J.T.

Federal Advocacy & Public Policy Update

June 28, 2021

Congressional Update

Lawmakers Reach Tentative Infrastructure Deal, Path Forward Remains Murky

A bipartisan group of 21 Senators continued to meet this week to discuss and negotiate potential investments in the nation's infrastructure. Late Wednesday night, June 23, this group of Senators announced with much fanfare that they had reached agreement on a $953 billion proposal focused exclusively on "traditional" physical infrastructure. Significantly, the proposed framework does not include funding for school infrastructure or other "nontraditional" infrastructure investments many Congressional Democrats had hoped to include. The next morning this group of Senators was invited to the White House to meet with President Biden to further discuss this deal. Following this meeting, President Biden appeared publicly with the group of 21 Senators to announce that they had agreed to the proposal.

Yet as news of the deal began to circulate, additional complications arose. Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA), while supportive of the proposal, announced that she would not allow the bipartisan deal to be considered unless the Senate passed a separate proposal inclusive of many Democratic priorities, including funding for K-12 school infrastructure. At the same time, Senators Moran (R-KS) and Graham (R-SC), both part of the group of 21 Senators who negotiated the framework, announced that they would oppose the deal that they had just helped strike if Democrats moved forward with plans to pass additional infrastructure investments, not included in this framework, via the reconciliation process. As opposition from both parties grew, Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell announced late Thursday night that ". . . we need to keep talking here"—an indication that there may not be enough support in Congress to pass this framework.

It remains unclear what will eventually happen with this most recent proposal. As these negotiations unfold, NSBA's advocacy team will continue to ensure that lawmakers in both parties fully appreciate the significant infrastructure needs of the K-12 community as part of any investment in the nation's infrastructure.

Secretary Cardona Testifies in the House

On Thursday, June 24, U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona testified before the House Education and Labor Committee on the priorities of his department for the upcoming 2022 federal fiscal year (FY22). A great deal of committee members' questions during the hearing focused on the issue of "Critical Race Theory" and the appropriate role the U.S. Department of Education (USED) should play as this issue gains more attention. Cardona was also questioned extensively regarding USED's recent notice of interpretation on Title IX, clarifying that transgender students are protected under this law. The hearing also explored a host of other, less controversial issues, including Career and Technical Education (CTE), state efforts to implement pandemic aid dollars for education, and other priorities contained in USED's FY22 budget. A link to a recording of the hearing, including testimony from Secretary Cardona, can be found here.

Bipartisan Legislation to Address Teacher Shortages Reintroduced

This week U.S. Senators Tim Kaine and Susan Collins, who serve on the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee, reintroduced the Preparing and Retaining Education Professionals (PREP) Act to address teacher and principal shortages, particularly in rural communities, and to increase teacher diversity. NSBA and other national education groups have supported this legislation, urging that it be included in the next reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, which includes provisions for teacher preparation programs. The PREP Act would expand the definition of "high need" districts under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to include schools experiencing teacher shortages in rural communities as well as in areas of special education, English language, science, technology, engineering, math, and career and technical education (CTE), in order to give schools access to additional support. It would also encourage school districts to create partnerships, including Grow Your Own programs, with local community colleges and universities to ensure their programs are educating future teachers in areas where there is a shortage of educators. The bill would increase access to teacher and school leader residency programs and preparation training. Further, it would require states to identify areas of teacher or school leader shortages by subject across public schools and use that data to target their efforts.

Administration Update

USED Hosts Equity Summit

On Tuesday, June 22, the USED hosted the first installment of its Equity Summit Series. Dubbed "Building Equitable Learning Environments in Our Schools," the event featured First Lady Jill Biden, U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona, and Deputy Education Secretary Cindy Marten. The convening explored strategies for

advancing equity as part of school reopening efforts and how the Biden Administration's proposed FY22 budget and previous investments made via the American Rescue Plan can help promote this work.

Discretionary Grants

"Expanding Opportunity through Quality Charter Schools Program (CSP) – Grants for Credit Enhancement for Charter School Facilities" – This program seeks to provide grant opportunities for entities, focused on acquiring, constructing, and renovating facilities through innovative methods. The estimated available funds for this discretionary grant program total $43,000,000, contingent upon the availability of funds and quality of applications. Applications are due by July 23, 2021, and further information is available here.

New Legislation

H.R.4108 — 117th Congress (2021-2022) To amend the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act to establish a pilot grant program to make grants to school food authorities to provide 100 percent plant-based food and milk options, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep. Velazquez, Nydia M. [D-NY-7]

H.R.4097 — 117th Congress (2021-2022) To support educational entities in fully implementing title IX and reducing and preventing sex discrimination in all areas of education, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep. Matsui, Doris O. [D-CA-6]

H.R.4076 — 117th Congress (2021-2022) To amend the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 to give the Department of Education the authority to award competitive grants to eligible entities to establish, expand, or support school-based mentoring programs to assist at-risk students in middle school and high school in developing cognitive and social-emotional skills to prepare them for success in high school, postsecondary education, and the workforce. Sponsor: Rep. Schakowsky, Janice D. [D-IL-9]

H.R.4053 — 117th Congress (2021-2022) To provide Federal student loan relief for teachers who work in a military impacted community. Sponsor: Rep. Jackson, Ronny [R-TX-13]

H.R.4011 — 117th Congress (2021-2022) To divert Federal funding away from supporting the presence of police in schools and toward evidence-based and trauma informed services that address the needs of marginalized students and improve academic outcomes, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep. Pressley, Ayanna [D-MA-7]

H.R.4005 — 117th Congress (2021-2022) To direct the Director of the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency to establish a School Cybersecurity Improvement Program, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep. Matsui, Doris O. [D-CA-6]

S.2198 — 117th Congress (2021-2022) A bill to amend the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 to give the Department of Education the

authority to award competitive grants to eligible entities to establish, expand, or support school-based mentoring programs to assist at-risk students in middle school and high school in developing cognitive and social-emotional skills to prepare them for success in high school, postsecondary education, and the workforce. Sponsor: Sen. Durbin, Richard J. [D-IL]

S.2186 — 117th Congress (2021-2022) A bill to support educational entities in fully implementing title IX and reducing and preventing sex discrimination in all areas of education, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Sen. Hirono, Mazie K. [D-HI]

S.2136 — 117th Congress (2021-2022) A bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to provide for the implementation of curricula for training students, teachers, parents, and school and youth development personnel to understand, recognize, prevent, and respond to signs of human trafficking and exploitation in children and youth, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Sen. Murkowski, Lisa [R-AK]

S.2125 — 117th Congress (2021-2022) A bill to divert Federal funding away from supporting the presence of police in schools and toward evidence-based and trauma informed services that address the needs of marginalized students and improve academic outcomes, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Sen. Murphy, Christopher [D-CT]