Good Friday Afternoon! Please find the Federal Advocacy & Public Policy Update for December 17, 2021 at the conclusion of this message. This will be the last Federal Advocacy Update of 2021.

If you have any questions about information found in this update, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Have a great weekend!

Best,

J.T.

Federal Advocacy & Public Policy Update
December 17, 2021

Congressional Update

Congress Increases Nation's Debt Limit

On Thursday, December 16, President Biden signed legislation to increase the nation's borrowing authority, known as the "debt ceiling," by $2.5 trillion. As a reminder, the debt ceiling is the total allowable amount that the federal government is legally permitted to borrow to pay for expenses already incurred. This increase is expected to provide sufficient borrowing authority until sometime in 2023.

Late last week, lawmakers reached an agreement to exempt the debt limit extension from the Senate's filibuster rules, allowing for passage in the chamber. Lawmakers crafted a narrow, bipartisan legislative package that temporarily suspended the Senate's filibuster authority for a single bill that would increase the nation's borrowing limit by this agreed upon amount. Using this procedural maneuver, Senators were able to clear the bill by a majority vote. On December 14, the Senate (50-49) and House (221-209) passed a $2.5 trillion dollar debt limit increase and President Biden signed it into law later in the week.

Congressional Negotiations Continue - Build Back Better Act

Lawmakers are continuing to negotiate the president's $1.75 trillion Build Back Better Act. Congressional leaders hope to pass this legislation via the Congressional budget reconciliation process which allows certain legislation to pass by simple majorities in both chambers of Congress, thus circumventing a likely Republican filibuster in the Senate. The legislation would provide significant new investments in education,

including over $400 billion over 10 years for new universal pre-K and childcare programs, $300 million of additional funding for the Emergency Connectivity Fund, and hundreds of millions of dollars for teacher recruitment and retention, school leadership, and more.

The Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee posted new text of the BBBA over the weekend as discussions with the chamber's parliamentarian have continued throughout the week. However, opposition from Senator Joe Manchin (R-WV) has remained a key obstacle to the bill's passage. As this delay continues, it is increasingly likely that the Senate will recess for the holidays for the remainder of the month of December and resume consideration of the BBBA when Senators return to Capitol Hill on January 3, 2022. President Biden has, more recently, conceded that Democrats are unlikely to pass the BBBA prior to the end of the year and has said he is still committed to passing the bill through the Senate "as early as possible."

Administration Update

USED Releases Accountability and School Improvement FAQ Document

Department of Education has released the new Accountability and School Improvement FAQs. You can access the document here. This document, which is being published to invite public comments, is intended to support State educational agencies (SEAs), local educational agencies (LEAs), and schools as they implement accountability and school improvement requirements under section 1111 of the ESEA using data from the 2021-2022 school year. This document is posted for stakeholder review and comment through January 16, 2022. They ask that you refrain from providing line-edits of the document. Instead, please submit substantive comments about the content of the draft, including feedback on any additional topics you would like to see included, to OESE.Feedback@ed.gov.

USDA Adds Additional States to School Meal Program Initiative

Yesterday, December 16, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) added eight additional states to participate in the Direct Certification with Medicaid Demonstration Project for nutrition programs for the upcoming 2022-23 school year. The initiative increases low-income children's access to the school meal program while reducing administrative burdens for schools and parents by allowing officials to use data from Medicaid to identify and determine a child's eligibility for school meal programs. More on the announcement here.

USED Announces New Innovation and Research Grants

On Monday, December 13, the U.S. Department of Education (USED) announced $182 million in new grant awards for 30 school districts, institutions of higher education, and other entities to participate in the Education Innovation and Research (EIR) program. Authorized as part of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the EIR program is intended to provide funding to create, develop, and otherwise implement evidence-based and innovative approaches to improving student achievement and attainment. The full list of grantees can be found here.

New Legislation

H.R.6293 To amend the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 to require States to designate public high schools as voter registration agencies, to direct such schools to conduct voter registration drives for students attending such schools, to direct the Secretary of Education to make grants to reimburse such schools for the costs of conducting such voter registration drives, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep. Wilson, Frederica S. [D-FL-24]

H.R.6287 To amend the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act to meet the needs of homeless children, youth, and families, and honor the assessments and priorities of local communities. Sponsor: Rep. Sherrill, Mikie [D-NJ-11]

H.R.6262 To ban the teaching of critical race theory in public education, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep. Carter, Earl L. "Buddy" [R-GA-1]

H.R.6227 To amend the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act to allow direct certification of children in households of active duty members of the Armed Forces for certain Federal school meal programs, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep. Levin, Mike [D-CA-49]

H.R.6214 To effectively staff the high-need public elementary schools and secondary schools of the United States with school-based mental health services providers. Sponsor: Rep. Clark, Katherine M. [D-MA-5]

S.3398 A bill to amend the Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grant program to promote career awareness in accounting as part of a well-rounded STEM educational experience. **Sponsor:** Sen. Collins, Susan M. [R-ME]