



The Consortium of State School Boards Associations  
Weekly Education Report  
**LAST WEEK IN WASHINGTON**

**APRIL 24, 2023**

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*The COSSBA Education Report*, a weekly publication, provides an executive summary of public policy issues affecting American K-12 education and employment. **Please use the bookmarks below to navigate to your area of interest:**

1. **News, Publications, & Updates on COSSBA Policy Priorities**
  - **Funding**
    - **USDA Forest Service Invests More Than \$228 Million to Support Schools, Roads, Other Services**: On April 14, the Department of Agriculture’s Forest Service announced it is releasing more than \$228 million to support public schools, roads and other municipal services through the agency’s Secure Rural Schools program.
2. **Budget and Appropriations Wrap-up**
  - **Impact on State School Board Associations**
3. **In Brief – Last Week in Washington**
  - **House Education Panel Holds Hearing on School Choice**: On Tuesday, April 18, the House Education and the Workforce Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education held a hearing titled, “School Choice: Expanding Freedom for All.”
  - **Appropriations Subcommittee Questions ED Secretary**: On Tuesday, April 18, the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education **held** a budget hearing on the Fiscal Year 2024 request for the Department of Education.
  - **Axios Hosts Cardona and Foxx for Skills-Based Hiring Conversation**: On Wednesday, April 19, Axios hosted an event that explored the shift toward skills-

based hiring, featuring Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona, Maryland Governor Wes Moore (D) and House Education and the Workforce Committee Chair Virginia Foxx (R-NC).

- **State Lawmakers Examine Education Funding and School Choice:** On Wednesday, April 20, the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) hosted its third event on education trends in the states focused on education choice and school finance.
- **House Approves Bill Banning Trans Athletes from Women Sports:** On Thursday, April 20, the House of Representatives passed **H.R. 734**, the *Protection of Women and Girls in Sports Act of 2023*.

#### 4. **New Publications**

- **The Need to Make Math More Relevant and Engaging for K-12 Students** *Global Strategy Group and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (April, 2023)*  
This Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation-funded report addresses why math education is perceived as unengaging, outdated, and disconnected from the real world, leaving students uninterested in what they are learning and lacking adequate preparation for later in life and looks at ways math education can be made more engaging and enjoyable for K-12 students.

#### 5. **In the News**

- **High-Profile Security Incidents Drive Creation of State School Safety Centers** *K-12 Dive (April 21, 2023)*
- **Confronting the ‘High School Cliff’: What Young Adults with Disabilities Need to Succeed** *Flatland (April 20, 2023)*
- **Statement from Secretary Cardona on Speaker McCarthy’s Debt Ceiling Proposal** *U.S. Department of Education (April 19, 2023)*
- **Teachers Nationwide are Flummoxed by Students’ New Chess Obsession** *The Washington Post (April 15, 2023)*

#### 6. **Weekly Calendar - What’s coming up this week?**

- **40 Years of A Nation At Risk: Where are We and What’s Next for Public Education?** The Aspen Institute Education & Society Program will hold a public panel to commemorate the enduring contributions of this landmark report, take stock of lessons learned, and frame an agenda that will meet the challenges of today and tomorrow while galvanizing broad, bipartisan support.  
*April 25 at 3pm ET*
- **Reimagining Assessments to Unlock Student Potential:** Whiteboard Advisors will host a webinar on “Reimagining How We Assess Learning to Unlock Student Potential.”  
*April 25 at 3pm ET*
- **State Partnerships Advancing School Leadership:** The National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) will host an event to examine key insights

and lessons on the pivotal role state policymakers can play in advancing effective school leadership.

*April 25 at 3pm ET*

- **House Oversight Subcommittee on Consequences of School Closures Part 2:** The House Oversight and Accountability Select Coronavirus Pandemic Subcommittee will hold a hearing on "The Consequences of School Closures, Part 2."

*April 26 at 2pm ET*

- **Voices from the Classroom 2023:** Educators for Excellence (E4E) will be releasing their 6th annual national teacher survey results - Voices from the Classroom: Teachers advocate for change to America's entire education system.

*April 27 at 9:30am ET*

- **Research Update on Examining Social Emotional Learning:** The Learning Policy Institute and CASEL will host a webinar to discuss significant advancements in the evidence base regarding social and emotional learning and what this means for research, practice, and policy.

*April 27 at 1pm ET*

## 7. **On The Floor of Congress This Week**

- **Legislative vehicle for Veterans Package**
- **Limit, Save, Grow Act of 2023**
- **House Resolution** disapproving the rule submitted by the Department of Commerce relating to "Procedures Covering Suspension of Liquidation, Duties and Estimated Duties in Accord With Presidential Proclamation 10414"
- **House Concurrent Resolution** directing the President, pursuant to section 5(c) of the War Powers Resolution, to remove all United States Armed Forces, other than United States Armed Forces assigned to protect the United States Embassy, from Somalia

## 8. **Important U.S. House and Senate Links**

## 9. **About BPAG**

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# 1. COSSBA Policy Priorities

## FUNDING

### USDA INVESTS OVER \$228M TO SUPPORT SCHOOLS, ROADS, OTHER SERVICES

The Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Forest Service **announced** on April 14 that it is releasing more than \$228 million to support public schools, roads and other municipal services through the agency's **Secure Rural Schools** program. The program was reauthorized for fiscal years 2021 through 2023 by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. Funds will be paid to 742 eligible counties in 41 states and Puerto Rico. "The Secure Rural Schools program is one of many ways the Forest Service provides continuous support to communities across the country" said Forest Service Chief Randy Moore. He continued, "Not only do these dollars provide funding for schools and roads, but the program also reimburses counties for providing emergency services on national forests and supports the development of community wildfire protection plans, all critical

programs designed to improve the quality of life in these communities.” This year’s payments are listed [here](#).

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## **2. Budget and Appropriations Wrap-Up**

The House and Senate were in full Appropriations mode last week, as subcommittees on both sides of the Capitol hosted agency leaders who defended President Biden’s Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 budget request, including Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona, who outlined the agency’s \$90 billion request and underscored its core themes: 1) Achieving Academic Excellence; 2) Boldly Improving Learning Conditions; 3) Creating Pathways for Global Engagement; and 4) Making Postsecondary Education Inclusive and Affordable.

Later in the week, House Speaker Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) unveiled his plan to cut spending and address the country’s debt limit. [The bill](#) would increase the debt ceiling for one year or by \$1.5 trillion, whichever comes first, and cut discretionary spending to FY 2022 levels, and then cap discretionary growth at 1% per year for the following 9 years. The bill also adds additional work requirements for some Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Medicaid recipients and ends some of the Administration’s key initiatives, including the student debt relief plan. If appropriators followed the plan, the FY 2024 funding level would be 9% below FY 2022.

House Appropriations Committee leaders are looking to start marking up bills next month, while education and other advocates are considering how to react to the Speaker’s proposal. The proposed cuts could be devastating to a number of federal programs, but, even if spending bills that adhere to the proposed cuts are passed by the House (as of Friday, it was not clear that Speaker McCarthy has secured the necessary votes to pass his plan on the House floor), they almost certainly would not be approved by the Senate and would face opposition from the White House. The possibilities for appropriations drama later in the year include a potential default on the country’s debt if Speaker McCarthy and the White House do not negotiate; multiple temporary spending measures that keep the federal government operating while negotiations continue; a possible federal government shut down if there is not approval of temporary measures; or the enactment of a full-year continuing resolution that keeps funding at current levels for the next fiscal year. This week should provide some clarity on whether Speaker McCarthy has the support he needs to get his plan through the House, however the next steps after that are unclear.

### **How does this impact State School Board Associations?**

As highlighted above, Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona appeared before House appropriators to discuss the proposed education funding for FY 2024. Democrats on the Subcommittee were largely supportive of the request, and Ranking Member Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) warned of the consequences of a 22% cut to education programs. Republicans criticized the agency’s recent Title IX proposed rule changes on transgender students in school athletic programs, as well as student debt relief efforts. Even so, there were bipartisan moments around investment in skills-based learning, career pathways, and workforce development. (Secretary Cardona is expected to return for an appearance before the Senate spending panel in a few weeks.)

As for Speaker McCarthy’s debt limit bill, we have previously reported on its intended budget cuts and a provision rescinding any unspent COVID-relief funds. It is possible that this move would have a significant impact on state education agencies and local school districts, as throughout the last year, it was reported that school systems throughout the country had spent less than 15 percent of their ESSER III funds during the 2021-2022 school year. Prior to the bill’s introduction last week, House Republican aides were pointing to government studies showing that there is \$500 billion in unspent funds. Even so, they also noted that a portion of that has been “obligated” to certain funds and will be difficult to rescind. According to U.S. Comptroller General Gene Dodaro, about \$157 billion of COVID-relief funding is “unobligated.”

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### **3. In Brief – Last Week in Washington**

#### **HOUSE EDUCATION PANEL HOLDS HEARING ON SCHOOL CHOICE**

On Tuesday, April 18, the House Education and the Workforce Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education held a hearing titled, “School Choice: Expanding Freedom for All.” The hearing included a member panel, which featured Representatives Warren Davidson (R-OH), Mark Pocan (D-WI), and Adrian Smith (R-NE). Davidson pressed for schools receiving Title I and II funds to give students the opportunity to attend a school outside of their district. Subcommittee Chair Aaron Bean (R-FL) was optimistic about school choice policy getting through a divided Congress, saying in his opening remarks that he’s “naive enough to think that maybe this is a topic that can bring our body together.” Democratic lawmakers pushed back on school choice options, like private school vouchers and charter schools, arguing that more accountability is needed. “Private school voucher programs also lack meaningful accountability requirements, leaving taxpayer money vulnerable to significant waste, fraud and abuse,” Rep. Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR) said in her opening remarks. Rep. Jahana Hayes (D-CT), said she supported charter schools, but asserted that they need more accountability on teacher turnover and student diversity. “I am a proponent of public charter schools. I think that parents should be able to choose a school that has a specific stream or a STEM academy or arts education or whatever it is their children are looking for,” Hayes said. “But I also believe that public funds should require public accountability and that is what we’re not talking about today.” A recording of the hearing can be found [here](#).

#### **APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE QUESTIONS ED SECRETARY**

On Tuesday, April 18, the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education held a budget hearing on the FY 2024 request for the Department of Education (ED). Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona outlined ED’s \$90 billion request, an increase of \$10.8 billion from the FY 2023 enacted level, and underscored the FY 2024 proposal’s core themes: 1) Achieving Academic Excellence; 2) Boldly Improving Learning Conditions; 3) Creating Pathways For Global Engagement; and 4) Making Postsecondary Education Inclusive and Affordable. Democrats on the Subcommittee largely commended the ED’s FY 2024 budget request, while many Republicans criticized the agency’s recent Title IX proposed rule changes on transgender students in school athletic programs and targeted student debt relief. Even so, the Subcommittee displayed general bipartisan agreement on continued investment in skills-based learning, career pathways, workforce development, and Pell Grants. Subcommittee Chairman Robert Aderholt (R-AL) said in his opening remarks that the

proposed 13 percent increase in funding would leave students unprepared for twenty-first century jobs and “saddle the nation” with debt, while Ranking Member Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) commended the proposal’s “important investments to ensure students from lower-income backgrounds can succeed.” She commented on the proposal’s increased investment in programs that serve students with disabilities and the important investments to equip educators with the resources they need to succeed. By highlighting the different funding levels provided in the FY 2024 budget request, Cardona’s testimony affirmed the Administration’s commitment to ensuring that youth with disabilities receive the services and support they need; investing in high-quality and affordable early childhood through post-secondary education through evidence-based strategies; supporting social, emotional, mental, and behavioral supports in schools and school safety initiatives; and finally, elevating respect for and investment in the teaching profession. The full hearing can be viewed [here](#).

### **AXIOS HOSTS CARDONA, FOXX FOR SKILLS-BASED HIRING CONVERSATION**

On Wednesday, April 19, Axios hosted an event, sponsored by LinkedIn, that explored the shift toward skills-based hiring, featuring Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona, Maryland Governor Wes Moore (D) and House Education and the Workforce Committee Chair Virginia Foxx (R-NC). Secretary Cardona opened the event and discussed the need for the country’s education system to evolve to meet the needs of the country’s workforce. He pointed to the enactment of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Act, the Inflation Reduction Act, and the CHIPS and Science Act and the associated jobs, saying that the federal Departments of Education, Commerce and Labor are working together to encourage partnerships across K-16 education to educate the needed employees. He noted that the White House FY 2024 budget request would fund Career Connected Learning at the Department of Education to support these efforts. He and others said repeatedly that four-year degrees “are not right for everyone” and that the stigma associated with career and technical education needs to be addressed. That work, according to Cardona and Dr. Foxx, who spoke after him, starts with parents, who need to be educated about the six-figure opportunities available to their children who pursue some non-degree bearing pathways to the workforce. Dr. Foxx’s remarks started with her familiar dislike for the term “training,” asserting, “You train dogs. You educate people.” She and other panelists referred to an “arbitrary degree barrier to work” and said that employers and others need to consider the skills required for various jobs versus degree(s). Secretary Cardona, Dr. Foxx, and Governor Moore characterized the issue of skills-based hiring as a “purple” one that has an opportunity to be addressed on Capitol Hill this year via support for extending Pell Grant eligibility to short-term programs and action on the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. On the latter, Dr. Foxx noted that she and her colleague, Ranking Member Bobby Scott (D-VA), are optimistic about bipartisanship action. Governor Moore voiced his excitement for the next decade for Maryland, saying his state will lead, focusing on “work, wages and wealth,” with an “intentional” focus on equity. You can watch the event [here](#).

### **STATE LAWMAKES EXAMINE EDUCATION FUNDING AND SCHOOL CHOICE**

On Wednesday, April 20, the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) hosted its third event on education trends in the states focused on education choice and school finance. The event featured Michelle Exstrom, education program director at NCSL; Emily Ronco, NCSL policy associate; Massachusetts State Senator Jason Lewis (D); and Daniel Thatcher, NCSL senior fellow. Ronco began by highlighting changes in educational choice post-pandemic. She pointed to the “unprecedented” spike in homeschooling rates, as well as an increase in interest

around “universal eligibility,” which refers to school choice voucher programs that provide all children with the option to attend the public or private elementary or secondary school of their parents’ choosing. “The developments that we’re seeing in this topic are an increased number of the programs and a shift towards more universal eligibility,” Ronco stated. Senator Lewis discussed the strides Massachusetts has made within the state’s education system. He noted that Massachusetts National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP – the Nation’s Report Card) scores were higher than the U.S. average and examined benefits of the emerging diversification of learning methods, such as online school. Despite this success, Senator Lewis conceded that there is still more work to be done, as minority and economically disadvantaged students are scoring lower than average. He asserted that the State is aggressively working to close those gaps. Finally, Thatcher closed the webinar by explaining the nuance of education funding. In particular, he focused on a method termed “backpack funding.” Instead of delivering funding directly to the school district, the money would instead be delivered directly to the student. “The money is in their backpack for wherever they go to school – home, public school, charter school, wherever – and so this is a mechanism by which a lot of the choice programs have redirected funding.” The webinar can be viewed [here](#).

## **HOUSE APPROVES BILL BANNING TRANS ATHLETES FROM WOMEN SPORTS**

On Thursday, April 20, the House of Representatives passed [H.R. 734](#), the *Protection of Women and Girls in Sports Act of 2023*. The legislation passed on a 219-203 vote Thursday morning. The bill, led by Congressman Greg Steube (R-FL) and 92 of his Republican colleagues, generally prohibits school athletic programs from allowing individuals whose biological sex at birth was male to participate in programs for women or girls. Specifically, the measure would require educational institutions that receive federal funding to prohibit their participation. In addition, the bill would modify Title IX to define sex as what a person is assigned at birth. Republicans passed the bill with an amendment presented by Congresswoman Nancy Mace (R-SC) that would require the Government Accountability Office to conduct a study and report findings to Congress on the adverse psychological, developmental, and participatory effects on girls of allowing individuals assigned male at birth to participate in athletic programs designed for girls. An amendment offered by Congressman Andy Ogles (R-TN) also passed, which would clarify that the use of “athletic programs and activities” in the bill includes, but is not limited to, all programs or activities conditional upon participation with any athletic team. This federal effort reflects that movement in more than 20 states that have passed similar measures. House members debated the bill Wednesday, during which several Republican legislators, alongside Democratic pushback, expressed the bill’s necessity due to the Department of Education’s new proposed Title IX rule on athletics eligibility that would allow transgender girls to play sports with some limitations. The legislation will most likely stall in the democratically-controlled Senate, and if the bill does happen to make it through successfully, the White House has stated that it “strongly opposes” H.R. 734, and would veto it in an April 17 [statement](#) of administration policy.

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## **4. New Publications**

[The Need to Make Math More Relevant and Engaging for K-12 Students](#)  
*Global Strategy Group and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation* (April, 2023)

This Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation-funded report addresses why math education is perceived as unengaging, outdated, and disconnected from the real world, leaving students uninterested in what they are learning and lacking adequate preparation for later in life and looks at ways math education can be made more engaging and enjoyable for K-12 students.

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## 5. In the News

### High-Profile Security Incidents Drive Creation of State School Safety Issues

*K-12 Dive* (April 21, 2023)

### Confronting the ‘High School Cliff’: What Young Adults with Disabilities Need to Succeed

*Flatland* (April 20, 2023)

### Statement from Secretary Cardona on Speaker McCarthy’s Debt Ceiling Proposal

*U.S. Department of Education* (April 19, 2023)

### Teachers Nationwide are Flummoxed by Students’ New Chess Obsession

*The Washington Post* (April 15, 2023)

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## THIS WEEK IN WASHINGTON

### 6. Weekly Calendar

#### **Tuesday, April 25, 2023**

#### **Event: 40 Years of A Nation at Risk: Where Are We and What’s Next for Public Education?**

**Subject:** The Aspen Institute Education & Society Program will hold a public panel to commemorate the enduring contributions of this landmark report, take stock of lessons learned, and frame an agenda that will meet the challenges of today and tomorrow while galvanizing broad, bipartisan support.

**Participants:** Ross Weiner, executive director, Aspen Institute Education & Society Program; Gerard Robinson, fellow, Institute for Advanced Studies in Culture, University of Virginia; Penny Schwinn, commissioner, Tennessee Department of Education; Roberto Rodriguez, assistant secretary for planning, evaluation, and policy development, U.S. Department of Education; and Loren Cox, policy director, Aspen Institute Education & Society Program.

**Time and Location:** 3:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. ET; Aspen Institute, 2300 N Street, NW, Washington, D.C.

**Registration:** Register [here](#).

#### **Webinar: Reimagining Assessments to Unlock Student Potential**

**Subject:** Whiteboard Advisors will host a webinar on “Reimagining How We Assess Learning to Unlock Student Potential.”

**Participants:** Yigal Rosen, chief academic officer, BrainPOP; Bo Stjerne Thomsen, vice president, LEGO Foundation; Elizabeth Horner, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation; Chris



Purifoy, CEO and chairmain, Learning Economy Foundation; and Thomas Rodgers, vice president, Whiteboard Advisors.

**Time:** 3:00 p.m. ET

**Registration:** Register [here](#).

**Webinar: State Partnerships Advancing School Leadership**

**Subject:** The National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) will host an event to examine key insights and lessons on the pivotal role state policymakers can play in advancing effective school leadership.

**Participants:** Paolo DeMaria, president, NASBE (Moderator); Alonna Berry, education advisor, Governor Carney of Delaware; Matt Blomstedt, former Nebraska Commissioner of Education; and Francisco Escobedo, member, California State Board of Education.

**Time:** 3:00 p.m. ET

**Registration:** Register [here](#).

**Wednesday, April 26, 2023**

**Hearing: House Oversight Subcommittee on Consequences of School Closures Part 2**

**Subject:** The House Oversight and Accountability Coronavirus Pandemic Select Subcommittee will hold a hearing on "The Consequences of School Closures, Part 2."

**Time and Location:** 2:00 p.m. ET; 2247 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C.

**Registration:** Live stream available [here](#).

**Thursday, April 27, 2023**

**Event: Voices from the Classroom 2023**

**Subject:** Educators for Excellence (E4E) will be releasing their 6th annual national teacher survey results- Voices from the Classroom: Teachers advocate for change to America's entire education system.

**Time and Location:** 9:30 a.m. ET; 2044 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C.

**Registration:** Register [here](#).

**Webinar: Research Update on Examining Social Emotional Learning**

**Subject:** The Learning Policy Institute and CASEL will host a webinar to discuss significant advancements in the evidence base regarding social and emotional learning and what this means for research, practice, and policy.

**Participants:** Linda Darling-Hammond, president and CEO, Learning Policy Institute; Mark Greenberg, emeritus professor, Penn State University; founding board member, CASEL; Aaliyah Samuel, president and CEO, CASEL; and Timothy Shriver, chair, CASEL Board, UNITE, and Special Olympics.

**Time:** 1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

**Registration:** Register [here](#).

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## 7. On The Floor of Congress This Week

**Senate Floor:**

**S.326** - legislative vehicle for Veterans package

## **House Floor:**

**H.R. \_\_\_\_** - Limit, Save, Grow Act of 2023

**H.J. Res. 39** - Disapproving the rule submitted by the Department of Commerce relating to "Procedures Covering Suspension of Liquidation, Duties and Estimated Duties in Accord With Presidential Proclamation 10414"

**H. Con. Res. 30** - Directing the President, pursuant to section 5(c) of the War Powers Resolution, to remove all United States Armed Forces, other than United States Armed Forces assigned to protect the United States Embassy, from Somalia

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## **8. Links for Up-to-Date Information on Hearings, Legislation, and Events**

**[U.S. House and Senate 2023 Schedule](#)**

**[U.S. Department of Education](#)**

**[U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions](#)**

**[U.S. House Committee on Education and Labor](#)**

**[U.S. Senate Budget Committee](#)**

**[U.S. House Budget Committee](#)**

**[Congressional Budget Office](#)**

**[Federal legislative information](#)**

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## **9. About BPAG**

**Bose Public Affairs Group** is a full-service government affairs and public relations consulting firm that has built a reputation for producing results. We partner with clients committed to excellence in education and other social services to achieve policy and advocacy success by:

- leveraging our expertise and passion;
- strategizing intelligent solutions; and,
- Creating meaningful impact.

Our team includes long-term insiders in education policy from Pre-K through higher education, innovative thinkers and savvy strategists that provide a comprehensive array of customized client services. We have the knowledge, skills, and relationships that are necessary for successful advocacy at all levels. From grassroots to grass tops and everything in between, our broad-based legislative practice approaches every project with the same degree of determination and professionalism. BPAG provides expertise in a variety of services:

- Government Relations
- Research and Analysis
- Advocacy Training
- Association Management
- Strategic Communications
- Policy Events

For more information, please visit our [website](#).

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