The MSBA and COSSBA Federal Advocacy Update is your timely news about current public education issues affecting Minnesota schools.

MSBA became a charter member of the Consortium of State School Boards Associations (COSSBA) in 2021. COSSBA is a nonpartisan, national alliance dedicated to sharing resources to support, promote and strengthen state school boards associations as they serve their local school districts and board members. COSSBA works to advance federal congressional priorities on behalf of 25 state school board association members.

Earlier this month, Congress approved a package of six spending bills that averted — yet again — a partial federal government shutdown. Congress continues to work on a second package that includes the remaining six funding bills, including the FY 2024 Labor, Health and Human Services and Education spending bill. The deadline for those efforts is March 22 — this Friday.

If you are confused about these timelines, multiple continuing resolutions, and appropriations process you are not alone. The Biden Administration’s FY 2025 budget request has been released while half of the FY 2024 appropriation bills have not been finalized. COSSBA shared a quote from a seasoned advocate, “We’re currently in FY 2024, operating on FY 2023 funding levels, about to get the FY 2025 request.” Meanwhile, school board advocates await the unveiling of the FY 2024 Labor, Health, and Human Services and Education spending plan, keeping in mind that FY 2024 will be half over at the end of March. If you would like more details on this process, please see the full COSSBA Weekly Education Reports for March 11, 2024, and March 18, 2024. In addition, you can read the most recent COSSBA Court Report.

Top Three Federal Education Updates

1. Federal Mental Health Grant Application Resources are Now Available

Senator Tina Smith’s office shared the following resources to ensure that all school districts are aware of these opportunities. They recognize the challenge of applying for competitive grant funding, especially for applicants in smaller school districts. Senator Smith has offered to provide a letter of support for any federal grant applications using the form at this link: https://mnmsba.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/GrantLetterOfSupportRequestForm.docx
Additional resources to assist school districts in their applications are below:

- **Mental Health Service Professional Demonstration Grant Program**: The MHSP Program will award competitive grants to support and demonstrate innovative partnerships to train school-based mental health services providers to increase the number and diversity of high-quality, trained providers available to address the shortages of mental health services professionals in schools served by high-need LEAs.
- **Notice Inviting Applications**
- **MHSP Brochure**
- **MHSP Grant Application Q & A Technical Assistance Webinars**
  - Register for the March 29 webinar at [https://forms.office.com/g/Sm9EpPdEhy](https://forms.office.com/g/Sm9EpPdEhy)
  - Register for the April 29 webinar at: [https://forms.office.com/g/VtE6hCWSDn](https://forms.office.com/g/VtE6hCWSDn)
- **School-Based Mental Health Services Grant Program**: The SBMH grant program will award competitive grants to SEAs, LEAs, and consortia of LEAs to increase the number of credentialed mental health services providers providing school-based mental health services to students in LEAs with demonstrated need.
  - **Notice Inviting Applications**
- **SBMH Brochure**
  - **SBMH Grant Application Q & A Technical Assistance Webinars**
    - Tuesday, March 26, 2024, 2 p.m. to 3 p.m.
    - Tuesday, April 16, 2024, 2 p.m. to 3 p.m.

### 2. $82 Billion for the Department of Education (ED) in FY 2025 Budget Request

While we continue to watch the FY 2024 process, the FY 2025 process has begun with the release of President Biden’s FY 2025 budget request. For ED, President Biden has requested $82 billion in discretionary funding, which is an increase of $3.1 billion, or four percent, over the final FY 2023 figure for the agency. (Final FY 2024 figures remain unavailable as Congress continues to work on this year’s bill.)

Compared to FY 2023, the agency’s funding total includes modest increases of $200 million each for Title I and for special education state grants, along with increases for the two other special education state grant programs and for personnel preparation. The budget request also increases the maximum Pell grant award.

According to Secretary of Education, Miguel Cardona, the President is also asking Congress to spend “$8 billion in mandatory funding to support States and schools to meet the critical needs of their students by increasing student attendance and engagement; providing high-dosage tutoring; and expanding summer, extended, and afterschool learning opportunities.”

To read the details on the FY 2025 budget request for ED, visit this [link](https://forms.office.com/g/Sm9EpPdEhy).
3. Bipartisan Hearing on Youth Apprenticeships

The Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Subcommittee on Employment and Workplace Safety held a hearing on “Youth Apprenticeships: Building Partnerships, Strengthening Career Pathways.” This hearing highlighted legislation that establishes a five-year competitive grant program for workforce training for in-demand careers, targeted for the training needs of 16- to 22-year-olds. This legislation, the Jumpstart Our Businesses by Supporting Students (JOBS) Act of 2023, was co-sponsored by both Minnesota senators. If you are interested in learning more, the hearing can be viewed here.

Watch this update for future advocacy opportunities! If you’re unsure who represents you in Washington DC, visit this link. For more information on the Minnesota delegation in Washington, see this directory for Minnesota Members of Congress.