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 boards association members.

The House Appropriations Committee released interim FY 25 allocations. This funding reflects the total amount available to appropriators for FY 25. Under this proposal, non-defense discretionary spending is cut by $62 billion (8%) below FY 2024. The allotment for the Labor, Health and Human Services and Education bill is just over $184.5 billion which amounts to a cut of about $40 billion compared to FY 24. The Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Subcommittee markup is scheduled for June 27, with full Committee action following on July 10.

As both the U.S. House and U.S. Senate continue to work on FY 25 spending in the coming weeks, there will also need to be agreement on bills that can provide a bridge of temporary spending from the end of FY 24 (September 30, 2024) until final appropriations bills can be passed after the November presidential election (November 5, 2024). Final passage of the appropriations bills may even be delayed until the convening of the 119th Congress in January 2025.

Our COSSBA government affairs firm, Bose Public Affairs Group, reported that the education funding bill is always among the most controversial. Even though the House Appropriations Committee Chair, Tom Cole (R-OK) wants the committee to complete action on all 12 spending bills before the August recess, it would not be surprising if the education spending package markups were delayed or cancelled altogether. Congress will be in recess next week, breaking for the Memorial Day holiday.

For more details, you can read the full COSSBA Weekly Education Report dated May 20, 2024, at this link.
Top Three Federal Education Updates

1. Eighth Circuit Court Rules on Compensatory Special Education after Student’s 21st Birthday
   According to the COSSBA Court Report, the United States Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit (AR, IA, MN, MO, NE, ND, SD) heard a case regarding the compensatory education under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) available after a student’s 21st birthday. “During the course of litigation challenging a student’s IEP, the student had turned 22 years old, past the qualifying age (21) for a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) under the IDEA. Although the school district contended that the appeal was thus moot, the United States Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit disagreed and joined a few circuit courts in holding that compensatory education may be available beyond a student’s twenty-first birthday.”

   The complete report on this case as well as information about several other cases relevant to public education can be found by reading the COSSBA Court Report for this week.

2. White House Holds Summit on Chronic Absenteeism
   Last Wednesday, the Administration held an event called “Every Day Counts Summit: Addressing Chronic Absenteeism and Increasing Student Engagement.” The summit featured education leaders and experts from across the country including Miguel Cardona, Secretary of Education. The summit’s opening remarks underscored the importance of reducing absenteeism rates, noting how, since the pandemic, absenteeism can be attributed to up to a 27% decline in math and a 45% decline in reading scores.

   These concerns align with absenteeism challenges in Minnesota. According to the Minnesota Department of Education’s most recent attendance report, only 70% of students attended class at least 90% of the time during the 2021-2022 school year. This is a significant decline from pre-pandemic school years when about 85% of students attended regularly. Meanwhile, Minnesota student’s test scores in reading and math are about 10 percentage points lower than they were before the pandemic in 2019. Additionally, our Minnesota Student Survey, most recently conducted in 2022 showed increased numbers of students struggling with their mental health.

   To address these issues, the Every Day Counts Summit outlined a four-pronged approach including the following strategies:
   • Increasing communication with families.
   • Visiting families at their homes to find solutions.
   • Making school more relevant for students.
   • Investing in full-service community schools.

   Secretary Cardona stressed the urgent need for these comprehensive support services. He announced significant federal funding initiatives, including $250 million in grants aimed at combatting chronic absenteeism, as well as President Biden’s proposed budget allocations of more than $8 billion to further expand chronic absence interventions in the next fiscal year.

   You can watch a recording of the full summit by visiting this link.
3. Minnesota Congresspeople Engage with Our Students

As our school districts work to wrap up the school year, our federal representatives have shown their interest and commitment to supporting Minnesota students.

- Congressman Tom Emmer (Congressional District 6) announced that his office is accepting registrations for the Young Women’s Leadership Program that connects present and future leaders from across the state. High school students are paired with community leaders and can greatly benefit from the mentorship experience as they consider their opportunities after high school graduation. This summer there will be three sessions that focus on women in media, public service, and law enforcement. To learn more about the program and apply, visit the [Women’s Leadership Program website](#).

- Congressman Dean Phillips (District 3) visited Armstrong, Wayzata, and Minnetonka high schools to talk with students about civic engagement and spent time at Bloomington Kennedy high school to attend a session facilitated by Change the Outcome, to learn about decreasing student substance use. He also met with his 2024 Youth Advisory Council, made up of high school students, to discuss policies that could impact climate change and the national debt crisis.

- Congressman Brad Finstad (District 1) had a meeting with 6th and 7th grade students from the Rochester Arts and Science Academy to hear about their learning experiences on a recent trip to Washington, D.C.

- Representative Ilhan Omar (District 5) met with a group of 5th graders at the FAIR School in Crystal to talk about her role in congress. She also met with a group of 6th graders who are working on a Community Schoolyard project with the Trust for Public Land.

**Watch this update for future advocacy opportunities!** If you’re unsure who represents you in Washington, D.C., visit this link. For more information on the Minnesota delegation in Washington, see this directory for [Minnesota Members of Congress](#).