



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

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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**

• **ED, HHS Take Action to Commemorate Mental Health Awareness**

Month: Acknowledging Mental Health Awareness Month, the Department of Education (ED) and the Department of Health and Human Services announced new funding, rulemaking, and guidance for schools to help strengthen school-based mental health services.

• **Broadband Connectivity and E-Rate**

• **Senate Panel Examines Rural Broadband, Connecting Communities:**

On Wednesday, May 17, the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Rural Development and energy Subcommittee held **a hearing** on “Rural Broadband: Connecting our Communities to the Digital Economy.”

• **Child Nutrition**

• **Public Feedback Split On USDA’s Stricter School Nutrition Proposal**
K-12 Dive (May 18, 2023)

The Department of Agriculture (USDA) received over 136,000 public comments on its proposed rule to revise school nutrition standards on whole grains, sugar and sodium following the federal agency’s May 10

deadline for submissions. This article by *K-12 Dive* reviews the apparent division that can be seen throughout the submitted comments.

2. **Budget and Appropriations Wrap-up**

- **Impact on State School Board Associations**

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

- **Office of EdTech Holds Listening Session on Evidence-Building:** On Monday, May 15, the Department of Education’s (ED) Office of Educational Technology (OET) and Digital Promise held a listening session on cultivating partnerships to support edtech evidence building activities in schools.
- **House Panel Questions Cardona on ED Policy and Priorities:** On Tuesday, May 16, the House Education and the Workforce Committee hosted a hearing titled, “**Examining the Policies and Priorities of the Department of Education.**”
- **ED Releases School Diversity Report, Announces New Grant Program:** On Friday, May 19, to commemorate the 69th anniversary of the *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court ruling, the Department of Education (ED) **released** a new **report** on the state of diversity within America's schools, which finds that progress toward increased racial and socio-economic diversity has stalled in many communities, leading to inequitable access and outcomes for students.

4. **New Publications**

- **The State of School Diversity in the United States**
The US Department of Education (May, 2023)
The report provides a historical context of racial segregation and desegregation efforts, empirical research on longstanding resource inequity, and information on the value of expanding opportunities for local educational agencies (LEAs) to increase school diversity.

5. **In the News**

- **Debt Negotiations Hit a Snap as the Country Gets Closer to a Possible Default**
NPR (May 19, 2023)
- **‘So Catastrophic’: How A Debt Ceiling Breach Would Hurt Schools**
EducationWeek (May 17, 2023)
- **New Grants Could Fund 14K School Mental Health Workers. Will It Be Enough?**
EducationWeek (May 15, 2023)
- **School Police Removals Get A Second Look Across America**
Politico (May 15, 2023)

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

- **Keeping Kids Mentally and Physically Safe in Schools:** Sandy Hook Promise will host a briefing to explore the impact of the STOP School Violence Act since its passage five years ago and the importance of bipartisan funding for student

mental health. Expert panelists will share how violence and suicide prevention programming saves lives in schools every day.

Tuesday at 1pm ET

- **Strategies to Support Student Mental Health and Well-Being:** This webinar is the fourth in a series of conversations designed to boost family engagement practices between school and home. The six-month series, produced by the U.S. Department of Education in partnership with Carnegie Corporation of New York and Overdeck Family Foundation, will explore bright spots in the field and provide education leaders and practitioners with resources and evidence-based strategies to support student success.

Wednesday at 1pm ET

- **Centering Mental Health in Schools:** The National Association of Secondary School Principals will host "Be Well: Centering Mental Health in Schools" webinar. School leaders, policy experts, and a student will discuss the current state of student and educator mental health and policies to collectively advocate for improving the tools available to K-12 schools.

Wednesday at 1pm ET

- **White House Briefing with the Department of Education:** TBA

Thursday, May 25 at 1:30pm ET

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

- **Senate floor: Consideration of nominees**

- **House floor:**

- **S.J. Res. 11** – Providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the Environmental Protection Agency relating to “Control of Air Pollution From New Motor Vehicles: Heavy-Duty Engine and Vehicle Standards”
- **H.J. Res. 45** - Providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the Department of Education relating to "Waivers and Modifications of Federal Student Loans"
- **Begin consideration of H.R. 467** – HALT Fentanyl Act
- **Veto Message to Accompany 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”.

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

9. **About BPAG**

1. **COSSBA Policy Priorities**

FUNDING

ED, HHS TAKE ACTION TO COMMEMORATE MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

Acknowledging Mental Health Awareness Month, the Department of Education (ED) on Monday announced more than \$95 million in Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (BSCA) awards

to increase access to school-based mental health services and strengthen the pipeline of mental health professionals in schools. According to the announcement, the awards will help advance the Administration's efforts to tackle the mental health crisis in schools across the country as part of President Joe Biden's National Mental Health Strategy. The funding is being provided through two grants: The School Based Mental Health Services Grant Program (SBMH) and the Mental Health Services Professional Demonstration Grant Program (MHSP). Coinciding with this announcement, ED held a webinar that highlighted how these grant funds have been invested so far. The event featured opening remarks from Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) Acting Assistant Secretary Katherine Neas and several mental health and well-being professionals from academic institutions and local and state governments. The event accented the crucial role that comprehensive school-based mental health programs play in recruiting and retaining mental health professionals and supporting students' social and emotional well-being. The panel also provided best practices for establishing high quality, school-based mental health systems that promote positive learning environments. Meanwhile, on Thursday, the ED and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) announced updated resources and proposed regulations for schools to deliver health care to eligible students, with a focus on strengthening mental health services. Thursday's announcement included three actions the ED and HHS will take to also support Biden's national mental health strategy. Those actions include a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) that would streamline consent provisions when billing for Medicaid services provided through a student's individualized education program (IEP); a comprehensive guide for Medicaid school-based services to make it easier for schools to deliver and receive payment for health care services to eligible students; and the approval of state plan amendments for both New Mexico and Oregon that will allow Medicaid to pay for health care services schools delivered to more of their Medicaid-enrolled students. More information on BSCA grant funding and the accompanying webinar series, plus webinar recordings, can be found here, while the ED/HHS Comprehensive Guide to Medicaid Services and Administrative Claiming can be found here.

BROADBAND CONNECTIVITY AND E-RATE

SENATE PANEL EXAMINES RURAL BROADBAND, CONNECTING COMMUNITIES

On Wednesday, May 17, the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Rural Development and Energy Subcommittee held a hearing on "Rural Broadband: Connecting our Communities to the Digital Economy." The witness list included several telecommunications company representatives that shared their knowledge and experience and helped assess the Department of Agriculture's various broadband programs. Members of the Subcommittee delved into the disparities between rural and urban broadband service, and Subcommittee Chairman Peter Welch (D-VT) announced the introduction of a new bipartisan bill to improve the USDA ReConnect Loan and Grant Program. During his opening remarks, Welch stated, "Our overall job is to revitalize rural America and the health of rural America, we believe it is vital to the health as a nation." He further stated that because of the digital divide, "our kids are really limited in their educational opportunities." The National Education Association (NEA) also submitted written comment for the record, which outlined 10 policies and practices that Congress should consider to move toward digital equity for educators and students. "The NEA believes that the fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic has made it impossible to ignore the nation's digital divide and its repercussions on the rural communities, communities of color, and under-resourced communities it affects, and the association strongly supports efforts to ensure that every community in America has access to affordable, reliable, high-speed internet service," NEA said in its

comments. A recording of the hearing can be found [here](#), and NEA’s comments can be read [here](#).

CHILD NUTRITION

PUBLIC FEEDBACK SPLIT ON USDA’S STRICTER SCHOOL NUTRITION PROPOSAL

K-12 Dive (May 18, 2023)

The Department of Agriculture (USDA) received over 136,000 public comments on its proposed rule to revise school nutrition standards on whole grains, sugar and sodium following the federal agency’s May 10 deadline for submissions. *K-12 Dive* reports that the comments were generally split among those who voiced support for the stricter standards because they would make school meals healthier and opponents who said the proposed changes would hurt student participation in school meal programs.

[Back to top](#)

2. Budget and Appropriations Wrap-Up

Until last Friday, it had been reported that negotiations between Congressional leadership and the White House on how to address the country’s debt ceiling were going well. President Joe Biden canceled a number of international meetings to get back to Washington, DC, and the discussions. Then, on Friday afternoon, it was reported that negotiations hit a “pause.” In talking to reporters, House Speaker Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) blamed the break on the White House and their resistance to spending cuts. Republicans are looking for cuts that total \$130 billion; Democrats find that figure unpalatable. The news was somewhat deflating—to observers and markets—after Thursday’s optimism that a deal could be brokered and on the House floor this week. The House is in session this week while the Senate gets a jump on a Memorial Day Recess; the Senate is expected to return the week of May 29th while the House leaves Friday and is back in session on June 6th. Members of both chambers are on alert to return to Capitol Hill at any time throughout the planned breaks, but a number of Members are supposed to travel internationally and want to wrap up action on the debt limit before they leave. Perhaps it won’t come to calling lawmakers back, though, as some involved in the talks are suggesting that the pause is a ploy to convey the urgency of the matter at hand and get everyone back to the table.

In the meantime, the House Appropriations Committee has begun action on spending bills. The panel released, and subcommittees passed, its first four FY 2024 appropriations bills. Two bills – Military Construction-Veterans Affairs, and Homeland Security – have greater funding than the FY 2023 level while the other two – Agriculture and Legislative Branch – propose funding cuts. The bill House Republicans passed to increase the debt ceiling also set total appropriations for FY 2024 at FY 2022 levels. That means that funding for the remaining eight government funding bills will be even lower than FY 2023 levels—and, as a reminder, Republicans intend to increase defense funding.

How does this impact State School Board Associations?

Regarding appropriations, there are a lot of open questions on the process and funding levels. For example, if a would-be deal on the debt limit approves spending levels higher than the House Republican-backed bill, there could be more funds available for bills. The Labor, Health and Human Services and Education spending plan will surely be one of—if not the—last bills marked up, and will only be allocated what is left after the other bills are approved. Depending on the level, that could be devastating for education investments. It’s worth noting, however, in

meetings with Democratic staff on Capitol Hill, advocates were assured that whatever the House does with education spending, it will not be the final level and what is enacted. The Senate will not stand for deep cuts to the programs, nor will the White House. Regardless, a year-long continuing resolution with some kind of across-the-board cut is still a strong contender for a final solution sometime later this year. There will be much drama to report on before any final solution. On the potential of a debt ceiling breach, *EducationWeek* [dove into](#) what it could mean for schools, saying, “If a default happens before July 1, the federal government might be unable to distribute billions of dollars for high-need students, special education services, and English-language instruction. Because school districts—many of which have already set their budgets for the coming year—count on those funds, teacher layoffs, academic program cuts, and administrative chaos could ensue.” Read more [here](#).

[Back to top.](#)

3. In Brief – Last Week in Washington

OFFICE OF EDTECH HOLDS LISTENING SESSION ON EVIDENCE-BUILDING

On Monday, May 15, the Department of Education’s (ED) Office of Educational Technology (OET) and Digital Promise held a listening session on cultivating partnerships to support edtech evidence building activities in schools. The listening session featured a panel of educational leaders, practitioners, developers, and researchers that provided real-world examples of partnership work that led to evidence building in schools and the benefits and challenges of that work; best practices for educational organizations working to secure partnerships; and ideas on how ED can support organizations advancing this work. The webinar opened with remarks from OET Deputy Director Kristina Ishmael, where she explained how schools should be active participants in using evidence to inform adoption decisions concerning technology in schools and articulated OET’s role in providing schools with resources and guidance that support evidence-building efforts. OET Impact Fellow Dr. Yenda Prado and Digital Promise Senior Research Scientist Dr. Pati Ruiz followed Ishmael, setting the stage for a discussion on specific challenges schools and districts face when working to establish whether the education technology they use is evidence-based, which listeners were able to respond to. The listening session also included a discussion panel with participation from Dr. Matt Soldner, NCEE commissioner for the Institute of Education Sciences at the ED; Erin Mote, InnovateEDU executive director and cofounder; Monique Daviss, El Sol Sciences and Art Academy of Santa Ana executive director; Sunil Gunderia, Age of Learning chief innovation officer; and Dr. Ying Xu, assistant professor for the Marsal Family School of Education at the University of Michigan. The panel highlighted OET’s [EdTech Evidence Toolkit](#) as a resource schools can use to partner with local and state leadership, developers and researchers in evidence-building. The toolkit offers educational leaders support in using evidence to inform edtech adoption decisions in schools by providing introductory evidence-building activities for four tiers of evidence, as outlined in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA); example case studies for using evidence-building activities to inform edtech adoption; and suggestions for collaborative activities to encourage use of evidence in schools. Throughout the session, listeners were able to respond to poll questions that would propel panel discussion on the topic. More information can be found [here](#).

HOUSE PANEL QUESTIONS CARDONA ON ED POLICY AND PRIORITIES

On Tuesday, May 16, the House Education and the Workforce Committee hosted a hearing titled, [“Examining the Policies and Priorities of the Department of Education.”](#) The hearing

featured a single witness—Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona. During the proceeding, the Secretary faced queries on many familiar and topical education issues. The hearing made clear that Committee Chair Virginia Foxx (R-NC) and her Republican colleagues would like more responsiveness from the agency in their oversight efforts and that there is tremendous concern from them about the Department’s Title IX proposed guidance. In her opening remarks, Foxx cited the Committee’s “primary duty” of oversight and referred to 11 oversight letters she has directed to the Department of Education (ED) this year and what she considers to be the agency’s “disingenuous and misleading actions while being minimally responsive to congressional oversight.” In contrast, panel Democrats were largely supportive of the agency and the budget plan and used the hearing as an opportunity to warn of the effects of House Republican-proposed budget cuts. Ranking Member Bobby Scott (D-VA) specifically complimented the Agency’s efforts to address student loan programs, including relief efforts, forgiveness for public sector workers and income-driven repayment options. He additionally complimented the White House’s FY 2024 budget request, including efforts to buoy career and technical education, significantly increase funds for the country’s poorest schools, more funds for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), bigger Pell Grants and other proposals, saying, “When we invest in education, students can succeed.” There were concerns from both sides of the aisle as ED prepares to restart collection of federal student loan payments this year, given bad experiences with third party servicers of student loan programs in the past. A recording of the hearing and witness testimony can be viewed [here](#). A full memo prepared by Bose Public Affairs Group can be viewed [here](#).

ED RELEASES SCHOOL DIVERSITY REPORT, ANNOUNCES NEW GRANT PROGRAM

On Friday, May 19, to commemorate the 69th anniversary of the *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court ruling, the Department of Education (ED) [released](#) a new [report](#) on the state of diversity within America's schools, which finds that progress toward increased racial and socio-economic diversity has stalled in many communities, leading to inequitable access and outcomes for students. “Diverse schools benefit all students, helping to foster performance and success through improved academic achievement, social mobility, civic engagement, empathy, and understanding,” ED said in its press release. The Department also released a Notice Inviting Applications (NIA) for the newly established [Fostering Diverse Schools Demonstration Program](#), which will fund \$10 million in awards to local and state agencies to implement plans to increase diversity in schools. "Nearly 70 years after the *Brown v. Board* decision declared segregation in our public schools unconstitutional, we cannot ignore the powerful role that race, place, and income continue to play in access to educational opportunity in America," said Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona. “At a time when some are trying to turn ‘equity’ into a bad word, we must recognize that the racial and socioeconomic isolation that persists in our public schools undermines our national competitiveness by denying students of all backgrounds the rich educational experiences that result from diverse learning environments,” the Secretary continued. The State of School Diversity report can be found [here](#), and the NIA for the Fostering Diverse Schools demonstration program can be found [here](#).

[*Back to top.*](#)

4. New Publications

The State of School Diversity in the United States

The U.S. Department of Education (May, 2023)

The report provides a historical context of racial segregation and desegregation efforts, empirical research on longstanding resource inequity, and information on the value of expanding opportunities for local educational agencies (LEAs) to increase school diversity. This document also uses data collected by the Department to highlight the current state of school diversity, summarizes the ongoing 3 challenges, and discusses federal opportunities to support state and local efforts to foster diversity in schools and classrooms across the country.

[Back to top.](#)

5. In the News

Debt Negotiations Hit a Snag as the Country Gets Closer to a Possible Default

NPR (May 19, 2023)

'So Catastrophic': How a Debt Ceiling Breach Would Hurt Schools

EducationWeek (May 17, 2023)

New Grants Could Fund 14K School Mental Health Workers. Will It Be Enough?

EducationWeek (May 15, 2023)

School Police Removals Get a Second Look Across America

Politico (May 15, 2023)

[Back to top.](#)

THIS WEEK IN WASHINGTON

6. Weekly Calendar

Tuesday, May 23, 2023

Briefing: Keeping Kids Mentally and Physically Safe in Schools

Subject: Sandy Hook Promise will host a briefing to explore the impact of the STOP School Violence Act since its passage five years ago and the importance of bipartisan funding for student mental health. Expert panelists will share how violence and suicide prevention programming saves lives in schools every day.

Participants: Lena Kalandjian, former youth advisory board member, Sandy Hook Promise; Joel, current save student, Sandy Hook Promise; Jessica Neely, director, Say Something Anonymous Reporting System Crisis Center; Cosimo Tangorra, superintendent, New Hartford Central School District; Christopher Brockmeyer, chief deputy, Suffolk County, New York; and Kristen Jaccodine, school counselor, High Point Regional High School.

Time and Location: 1:00 p.m.; 2044 Rayburn HOB.

Registration: Register [here](#).

Wednesday, May 24, 2023

Strategies to Support Student Mental Health & Well-Being

Subject: This webinar is the fourth in a series of conversations designed to boost family engagement practices between school and home. The six-month series, produced by the U.S. Department of Education in partnership with Carnegie Corporation of New York and Overdeck Family Foundation, will explore bright spots in the field and provide education leaders and practitioners with resources and evidence-based strategies to support student success.

Time: 1:00-2:30 p.m.

Registration: Register [here](#).

Centering Mental Health in Schools

Subject: The National Association of Secondary School Principals will host "Be Well: Centering Mental Health in Schools" webinar. School leaders, policy experts, and a student will discuss the current state of student and educator mental health and policies collectively to advocate for improving the tools available to K-12 schools.

Time: 1:00 p.m.

Registration: Register [here](#).

Thursday, May 25, 2023

White House Briefing with Department of Education

Time: 1:30 p.m.

Contact: Register [here](#).

[Back to top.](#)

7. On The Floor of Congress This Week

Senate Floor: Consideration of nominees

House Floor:

- **[S.J. Res. 11](#)** – Providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the Environmental Protection Agency relating to “Control of Air Pollution From New Motor Vehicles: Heavy-Duty Engine and Vehicle Standards”
- **[H.J. Res. 45](#)** - Providing for congressional disapproval under chapter 8 of title 5, United States Code, of the rule submitted by the Department of Education relating to "Waivers and Modifications of Federal Student Loans"
- **Begin consideration of [H.R. 467](#)** – HALT Fentanyl Act
- **Veto Message to Accompany [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”.

[Back to top.](#)

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

[Back to top.](#)

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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