



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

**JULY 31, 2023**

Jared Solomon, Editor

[jsolomon@bosepublicaffairs.com](mailto:jsolomon@bosepublicaffairs.com)

Della Cronin, Editor

[dcronin@bosepublicaffairs.com](mailto:dcronin@bosepublicaffairs.com)

Bob Moran, Editor

[rmoran@bosepublicaffairs.com](mailto:rmoran@bosepublicaffairs.com)

Sarah Lamson, Deputy Editor

[slamson@bosepublicaffairs.com](mailto:slamson@bosepublicaffairs.com)

*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**
  - **Broadband Connectivity and E-Rate**
    - **Aspen Institute Considers Strategies to Bridge Digital Divide:** On Wednesday, the Aspen Institute held a webinar on “Educational Digital Divide: How to Reach 1.6 Billion Students Left Behind” as a part of the Aspen-HP partnership, The Digital Equity Accelerator.
  - **IDEA**
    - **ED Strengthens Guidance on Equal Opportunity for Children with Disabilities:** The U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) last week released updated policy guidance, which takes immediate effect, to ensure and strengthen the rights and protections guaranteed to children with disabilities and their families under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).
  - **Teacher Recruitment and Retention**
    - **ED, DoL Announce Efforts to Advance Teacher Prep, Expand Registered Apprenticeships:** The Department of Education and the Department of Labor today announced a series of new efforts to expand

Registered Apprenticeships for educators and invest in teacher preparation programs.

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

- **Impact on State School Board Associations**

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

- **House Education Subcommittee Hosts Hearing on Covid School Closures:** On Wednesday, the House Education and the Workforce Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education held a hearing that considered the impact of COVID-19 school closures on generational learning loss, while offering recommendations for how to improve federal support for families in the wake of the pandemic and its effects on teaching and learning.
- **Biden Admin Holds Summit on Affirmative Action Post SCOTUS Decision:** On Wednesday, the Department of Education held a National Summit on Equal Opportunity in Higher Education. The all-day event sought guidance from higher education stakeholders on how to ensure diversity and educational opportunity for under-represented students given the Supreme Court’s recent decision to end race-based admissions at colleges and universities throughout the country.
- **Brookings Highlights STEM Industry’s Call for Workforce Development:** The Brookings Institution convened two panels on Thursday as part of their Twelfth Annual John Hazen White Forum on Public Policy, entitled “Improving Workforce Development and STEM Education.”
- **Bipartisan Policy Center Spotlights Youth Mental Health Crisis:** The Bipartisan Policy Center (BPC) held a webinar entitled, “Mind Check: Policies to Support Youth Mental Health” on Thursday to discuss the growing mental health crisis amongst youth in the US.

4. **New Publications**

- **Education Priorities in the Next General Election**  
*Education Policy Institute (July, 2023)*  
This report highlights the key education challenges that incoming governments will address on improving education outcomes and reducing inequalities.

5. **In the News**

- **Ed Department Updates Guidance on Special ed Noncompliance**  
*K-12 Dive (July 24, 2023)*
- **Secretary Cardona Defends Public Education in Speech to American Federation of Teachers**  
*US Department of Education (July 24, 2023)*
- **Matthew McConaughey Creates Initiative to Help School Districts Receive Federal Funding**  
*Axios (July 20, 2023)*

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

- **Early Efforts: Seeking Solutions to the Child Care Crisis:** The COVID-19 pandemic only exacerbated longstanding challenges within the child care

industry, fueling a workforce/compensation crisis and creating new barriers to access and affordability. Join an expert panel as The Hunt Institute and Early Learning Nation partner to explore practical solutions.

*Tuesday at 2pm ET*

7. **Weekly Calendar – Future Events**

- **Educator and Administrator Retention – The Ultimate School Improvement Strategy:** During this Hunt Institute webinar, attendees will have the opportunity to hear more from experts who are studying principal retention and leaders who are implementing change to create a stronger school community for principals and educators.

*Thursday, August 17 at 2pm ET*

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

- Congress is in recess through September 5, 2023

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

10. **About BPAG**

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## 1. COSSBA Policy Priorities

### **BROADBAND CONNECTIVITY AND E-RATE**

#### **ASPEN INSTITUTE CONSIDERS STRATEGIES TO BRIDGE DIGITAL DIVIDE**

On Wednesday, the Aspen Institute held a webinar on “**Educational Digital Divide: How to Reach 1.6 Billion Students Left Behind**” as a part of the Aspen-HP partnership, **The Digital Equity Accelerator**. The webinar highlighted the stark digital disparities that exist for students internationally and how education policymakers are working to respond real-time to the 1.6 billion students who faced learning disruptions as a result of COVID-19. With Hazami Barmada from the Aspen Institute providing opening remarks as moderator, the panel featured International Projects Leader, Jessica Angeles, with the Research Institute for Educational Development (Mexico), James Donald who serves as Executive Director with E-Cubed DBE-E (South Africa), and Rebecca Lin, Head of Education at Dignity for Children Foundation (Malaysia). Each panelist provided diverse perspectives from their home countries on the state of digital equity globally, especially focusing on the role technology might play in providing resources to the massive numbers of students – up to 258 million – who are still not learning in the classroom. While all of the panelists broadly noted the important distinction between training teachers to use technology and actual access to such technology for students, Angeles provided perspective as an educator working with indigenous communities that often struggle to access innovative tech solutions. Despite the Mexican Minister of Education training teachers in programs like Google Classroom and Microsoft Suite, very few of Angeles’s Mayan students had access to laptops or technology at home, robbing the initiative of its efficacy. Donald focused on the positive ways technology might be used innovatively in schools, particularly detailing an adaption of technology for Social Emotional Learning. “Depending on the tools they use, the adults supporting them [students] —the ones trying to get them to explore their meaning and purpose in life — can get insights into their students that normally might take much longer,” Donald expressed as a new development in South African digital equity research. Lin and all of

the panelists recommended greater investment on the global scale into bridging the digital divide between students of different backgrounds, while embracing new, unique ways to incorporate technology into the classroom.

### **INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT (IDEA) ED STRENGTHENS IDEA EQUAL OPPORTUNITY GUIDANCE**

On Monday, July 24, the Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) released updated policy guidance, which takes immediate effect, to ensure and strengthen the rights and protections guaranteed to children with disabilities and their families under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The [guidance](#) and accompanying [Dear Colleague Letter](#) address the IDEA's "general supervision" requirement, which requires that states monitor [local educational agencies](#) (LEAs) as required by [IDEA Part B](#), and early intervention service (EIS) [programs](#) and [providers](#) as required by [IDEA Part C](#) to ensure children with disabilities and their families access their rights under IDEA. "As a former special education teacher, administrator, and state special education director, I've experienced implementation of IDEA's general supervision requirements at the state and local level and recognize the need to fortify the policy guidance," said Glenna Wright-Gallo, Assistant Secretary for the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation (OSERS). "We must continue to Raise the Bar for all children. One vital component of this effort is to ensure children with disabilities, birth through age 21, receive the early intervention services and a free appropriate public education (FAPE) that meets their unique needs and prepares them for further education, employment, and independent living." OSEP's updated guidance will: 1) Provide states with accessible and actionable information necessary to identify and correct noncompliance; 2) Help ensure the rights guaranteed under the IDEA to children with disabilities and their families are protected; and 3) Reaffirm expectations across states to help ensure consistent implementation of IDEA. Read more [here](#).

### **TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION ED, LABOR ANNOUNCE EFFORTS TO ADVANCE TEACHER PREP, APPRENTICESHIP**

Today, the Departments of Education (ED) and Labor (DoL) [announced](#) a series of new efforts to expand Registered Apprenticeships for educators and invest in teacher preparation programs. These efforts advance a key focus area of ED's [Raise the Bar: Lead the World](#) initiative to improve learning conditions by eliminating educator shortages and build on a [joint letter](#) sent by the Secretaries of Education and Labor last summer, which called on state education and workforce leaders to take action to address educator shortages. Today's announcement includes: 1) New [National Guidelines for Apprenticeship Standards](#) (NGS) for Registered Apprenticeships for K-12 teachers developed by [The Pathways Alliance](#); 2) More than \$27 million from the ED to support educator preparation programs, including the [Teacher Quality Partnership](#) and [Supporting Effective Educator Development](#) funds; 3) More than \$65 million from the DoL to develop and scale Registered Apprenticeship programs in critical sectors across 45 states—with 35 targeting education; 4) The DoL is announcing a new industry intermediary to launch, promote and expand Registered Apprenticeship programs for K-12 educators; and 5) A [policy brief](#) authored by ED that highlights how states are taking strategic

steps outlined by the Biden-Harris Administration to support the effective recruitment, preparation, and retention of teachers.

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

After a busy week, Congress left town for its August recess. They won't return to the people's business until after Labor Day. Before leaving, the Senate [passed a defense bill](#), and the House focused on FY 2024 spending bills. The House [passed the Military Construction-Veterans Affairs spending bill, but did not manage to pass the Agriculture spending package](#) before leaving town. The debate and consideration of the bills make it clear that enactment of the defense package and the annual spending bills will be heavy lifts in the fall. Regarding the former, the House passed a version of the bill that included a number of GOP-backed and controversial provisions, turning the normally bipartisan annual affair into a near-party-line vote. The Senate-approved defense bill does not include those provisions, setting the stage for tricky negotiations between the chambers. As for the annual spending bills, the House Freedom Caucus continues to insist on funding levels and other policy considerations that will make House passage—let alone Senate approval and enactment—very difficult.

While messy politics played out on the House and Senate floors, the Senate Appropriations Committee approved all 12 spending bills before the August recess. On Thursday, the Committee met for hours to consider a number of proposals, including [their FY 2024 Labor, Health and Human Services and Education \(LHHS\) appropriations bill](#). In a [joint press release](#), Senate Appropriations Committee Chair Patty Murray (D-WA) and Ranking Member Susan Collins (R-ME) said, “For the first time in five years, this committee finished passing all twelve individual appropriations bills with overwhelming bipartisan votes, under incredibly tough circumstances—and all before the end of July. When we said we would return this committee to regular order, we meant it—this is a big deal.”

While the Senate Appropriations Committee has approved all twelve of its FY 2024 bills in a bipartisan way, the House Committee has approved 10 bills with only Republican support. Despite plans to do so, the House Committee did not consider its LHHS or Commerce, Justice and Science bills this week. Congress will leave town with the House having passed just one appropriations bill and the Senate having passed none. In September, the House will be in session for only three weeks and the Senate for four weeks before the end of the current fiscal year. That's not a lot of time for debate and approval of the bills, let alone the complicated negotiations needed to produce compromise measures both chambers can pass. Many are expecting a government shutdown sometime this fall that could come as early as October 1. But first, the respite that August offers.

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

Senators Murray and Collins produced an education spending bill that adheres to the limits of the debt limit and spending caps [agreed to earlier this year](#), unlike [the House proposal](#), which proposes cuts that bring levels back to those of FY 2022 and makes severe cuts to education. The bill provides a tiny (0.2%, or \$147 million) net increase in funding for the Department of Education, proposing a budget of \$79.6 billion for the agency. The bill provides a bigger net increase (\$970 million) for early childhood programs at the Department of Health and Human

Services, with a \$975 million increase for Head Start and Child Care and Development Block Grants, and a \$5 million cut to the Preschool Development Program. It has slight cuts for library and museum programs and sustains funding for worker development programs in the Department of Labor.

Unlike the House plan, which would essentially gut the Title I program, the Senate bill provides a \$175 million increase for Title I-A grants to Local Education Agencies, for a total \$18.5 billion. The bill would level-fund investments in Title II efforts—those that support teachers, principals and other educators—at \$2.2 billion, while the House bill would zero out the program. The bill also provides \$1.4 billion, a \$20 million increase over last year, for Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants (Title IV, Part A). Funding for the afterschool programs supported by the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers program would be level at \$1.3 billion. The Teacher Quality Partnership program would receive \$85 million, an increase of \$15 million over FY 2023, and \$15 million would go to the Hawkins Centers of Excellence to address educator shortages, particularly in the highest-need school districts. The bill maintains investments in a range of other programs including TRIO, GEAR UP, and Postsecondary Student Success Grants to help students prepare for a postsecondary education and succeed once they are there. (A Committee-prepared summary of the bill is available [here](#).)

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

#### **HOUSE EDUCATION SUBCOMMITTEE HOSTS HEARING ON COVID SCHOOL CLOSURES**

On Wednesday, the House Education and the Workforce Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education held a hearing titled, “[Generational Learning Loss: How Pandemic School Closures Hurt Students](#)” featuring several expert panelists. With Chairman Aaron Bean (R-FL-04) presiding, Subcommittee members and featured witnesses considered the impact of COVID-19 school closures on generational learning loss, while offering recommendations for how to improve federal support for families in the wake of the pandemic and its effects on teaching and learning. While there was broad acknowledgement for the reality of pandemic-related learning loss, frustration with the politicized nature of school closures, pandemic-era policies, and federal response to parent needs was expressed. A full summary of the hearing is available [here](#).

#### **BIDEN ADMIN HOLDS SUMMIT ON AFFIRMATIVE ACTION POST SCOTUS DECISION**

On Wednesday, the Department of Education held a National Summit on Equal Opportunity in Higher Education. The all-day event sought guidance from higher education stakeholders on how to ensure diversity and educational opportunity for under-represented students given the Supreme Court’s recent decision to end race-based admissions at colleges and universities throughout the country. Education Secretary Miguel Cardona framed the event as an opportunity to re-imagine how we access higher education. He specifically noted that we need to blur the lines between K-12 and higher education, address the cost of college, solve the transfer issue and promote a culture of belonging and inclusion that can increase retention and graduation rates, especially for historically under-represented students. Secretary Cardona noted that diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) counter-balances racial discrimination and inequities and challenged the idea that DEI is somehow a “bad” term. He pushed elite institutions to step up and admit more Pell-eligible students and urged participants to turn the low point of the Court’s decision to

a high point and “**Raise the Bar.**” The event featured several panels discussing various elements of higher education policy. The first panel provided a conversation with diverse higher education leaders, moderated by Denise Forte from the Education Trust, about how the higher education community can commit to educational opportunity for all students. The opening panel covered a wide variety of topics: college affordability and free tuition, student basic needs, admission practices of elite institutions and research universities, partnerships with community colleges and the need to reform the transfer of college credits. For the second panel, U.S. Department of Education Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Catherine Lhamon, and U.S. Department of Education Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights, Kristen Clarke, presented a unified front on how the Biden Administration will be addressing issues related to educational equity, mentioning a new resource document that will be released next month to provide technical assistance to institutions and other stakeholders. The third panel highlighted innovative admission efforts to help build racially diverse student bodies through lawful and appropriate means, such as automatic or direct admissions, and building partnerships to support a diverse pipeline of students. The fourth panel focused on the pipeline of students, and included a K-12 superintendent and tribal college President Sandra Bohem of Salish Kootenai College. Panelists discussed outreach to community colleges and K-12 schools as a way to reduce barriers to accessing higher education as well as opportunities with dual enrollment programs. More information [here](#).

### **BROOKINGS HIGHLIGHTS STEM INDUSTRY’S CALL FOR WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

The Brookings Institution convened two panels on Thursday as part of their Twelfth Annual John Hazen White Forum on Public Policy, entitled “**Improving Workforce Development and STEM Education.**” With moderator Darrell West, a Senior Fellow with The Brookings Institution, noting the widespread news regarding **workforce shortages in key STEM industries**, the two panels considered how policymakers can best leverage existing talent to fulfill national STEM and economic goals. Expert panelists included Katharine Meyer and Annelies Goger, both Fellows with the Brookings Institution, John Hazen White, Jr. with the Taco Family of Companies, and Ellen Scully-Russ, an Associate Professor in Human and Organizational Learning at The George Washington University. Drawing on his perspective as a business leader, White, Jr. described the difficulty of recruiting skilled workers for his manufacturing plant, detailing both geographic and skill-based obstacles to recruitment. “We need to learn how to adapt to the current generations,” noted White, Jr., as his company has instituted **long-standing programs** that support their workers with relevant educational and skill-building initiatives. Meyer detailed policy responses employers and legislators could work to adopt, including financial aid reimbursement programs, tuition coverage for advanced credentials, high-intensity tutoring, and empowering students who left school during COVID-19 to re-enter STEM education programs. With importance being placed on reinvesting in STEM classrooms with better facilities and high-dosage tutoring, the second panel transitioned to focus more intently on the systemic barriers in the education system that prevent the full realization of our nation’s potential in STEM. Calling for an employer-led shift, “to not look at talent as a cost, but instead an asset,” for a growing organization, Goger and Scully-Russ recommended strategies to leverage upon successes found in the corporate sector, like seen in White, Jr.’s organization, and amplify innovative STEM education programs. Workforce training is seen as distinctly separate from the education system by many policymakers, but the modern STEM industry requires a rethinking of the way students are taught, trained, and prepared to enter the American workforce.

A breadth of questions were accepted from audience members, and unique strategies were proposed to better incorporate valuable, workforce-aligned STEM training into classrooms across the US. A recording of the event can be found [here](#).

## **BIPARTISAN POLICY CENTER SPOTLIGHTS YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS**

The Bipartisan Policy Center (BPC) held a webinar entitled, “[Mind Check: Policies to Support Youth Mental Health](#)” on Thursday to discuss the growing mental health crisis amongst youth in the US. Julia Harris, Associate Director of Health Policy at BPC, provided opening remarks about the staggering rise in mental health issues since the pandemic – over 40% of teenagers report struggling with persistent feelings of sadness, and the number of drug overdose deaths doubled from 2019 to 2021. “While these alarming trends cannot be blamed on any single factor, the acute lack of mental health and substance use treatment options for youth, as well as pressures from the pandemic, have definitely played an outsized role,” Harris noted as Representatives Seth Moulton (D-MA) and Gus Bilirakis (R-FL) provided feature remarks. Representative Moulton presented about his own mental health struggles, federal initiatives to start the [988 suicide prevention hotline](#), and new plans to institute more standard mental health checkups for teenagers and young students. Nearly a third of high school girls and half of LGBTQ students reported they considered suicide in the last year, to which Congress and the federal government is aggressively working to respond with bipartisan, innovative policies. Rep. Bilirakis focused much of his attention on the root issue of social media addiction and dangerous public health impacts seen from the overuse of social media by youth. “We must hold Big Tech accountable to protect children on their platforms and seek transparency so parents can make informed decisions with regards to their children,” concluded Bilirakis. Expert panelists included Solome Tibebu, Founder & CEO of Going Digital: Behavioral Health Tech, John MacPhee from The Jed Foundation, and Dr. Roshni Koli, who serves as Chief Medical Officer with the Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute. Broadly, the panelists recommended greater integration of mental health checkups into primary care services and education systems, enhancing the use of technology to better serve students, and creating alternative pathways for youth to access mental health services in and outside of school.

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## **4. New Publications**

### **Education Priorities in the Next General Election**

*Education Policy Institute* (July, 2023)

This report highlights the key education challenges that incoming governments will address on improving education outcomes and reducing inequalities. The Education Policy Institute in this report focuses on five areas: the early years; school organization and outcomes; post-16 and higher education; school and college funding; and the education workforce. In putting forward recommendations, it draws on available evidence as well as insights from a network of experts from the early years to higher education and is intended to guide policymakers and politicians to issues that matter and interventions that are effective.

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## **5. In the News**

### **Ed Department Updates Guidance on Special Ed Noncompliance**

*K-12 Dive* (July 24, 2023)

**Secretary Cardona Defends Public education in Speech to American Federation of Teachers**

*US Department of Education* (July 24, 2023)

**Matthew McConaughey Creates Initiative to Help School Districts Receive Federal Funding**

*Axios* (July 20, 2023)

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## **THIS WEEK IN WASHINGTON**

### **6. Weekly Calendar**

#### **Tuesday, August 1, 2023**

##### **Early Efforts: Seeking Solutions to the Child Care Crisis**

**Subject:** The COVID-19 pandemic only exacerbated longstanding challenges within the child care industry, fueling a workforce/compensation crisis and creating new barriers to access and affordability. Join an expert panel as The Hunt Institute and Early Learning Nation partner to explore practical solutions.

**Participants:** Elliot Haspel, director of climate and young children, Capita; Marica Cox-Mitchell, vice president of early childhood, Bainum Family Foundation; Cheryl Oldham, vice president of education policy, US Chamber of Commerce Foundation

**Time/Location:** 2pm ET

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

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### **7. Future Hearings and Events**

#### **Thursday, August 17, 2023**

##### **Educator and Administrator Retention: The Ultimate School Improvement Strategy**

**Subject:** The Hunt Institute will give attendees the opportunity to hear more from experts who are studying principal retention and leaders who are implementing change to create a stronger school community for principals and educators.

**Participants:** Stephanie Banchemo, education and economic mobility program director, The Joyce Foundation; Margie Vandeven, commissioner, Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education; Keilani Goggins, director, Black Educators Initiative, National Center for Teacher Residencies

**Time/Location:** 2pm ET

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

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

Congress is in recess through September 5, 2023.

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## 9. 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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## 10. 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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