



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

**JANUARY 22, 2024**

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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**
  - **Child Nutrition**
    - **Department of Agriculture Announces 2024 Reimbursement Rates for the Summer Food Service Program**: This notice informs the public of the annual adjustments to the reimbursement rates for meals served in the Summer Food Service Program.
2. **Budget and Appropriations Wrap-up**
  - **Impact on State School Board Associations**
3. **In Brief – Last Week in Washington**
  - **White House Announces New 2024 Student Achievement Agenda**: On Wednesday, the Biden-Harris Administration announced its Improving Student Achievement Agenda for 2024, which is focused on strategies to accelerate academic performance for all school-aged children.
  - **Center for American Progress Examines State Child Care Agendas**: On Thursday, the Center for American Progress (CAP) held a webinar titled, “Building a Comprehensive State Child Care Agenda.” The panel examined how individuals, families, and other advocates can utilize CAP resources to push for expanded access to high quality and affordable early education programs.
  - **Hunt Institute Takes a Look at School Choice Sentiment, Policies in 2024**: On Thursday, the Hunt Institute hosted a webinar focusing on school choice in 2024.

The panel highlighted results from The Hunt Institute’s 2023 Across the Aisle survey, which found that just under half of voters surveyed support using public dollars for school vouchers, and most voters support using public dollars for education savings accounts.

- **House Hearing Focuses on Students in a Skills-Based Economy:** On Thursday, the House Education and the Workforce Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education Subcommittee held a hearing on preparing students for success in the skills-based economy. In contrast to the high-profile education-related hearings of late, the proceeding displayed bipartisan sentiment on challenges and solutions to closing America’s 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills gap.

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

- **Critical Incident Review: Active Shooter at Robb Elementary School**

*United States Department of Justice (January, 2024)*

In providing a detailed accounting and critical assessment of the first responder actions in Uvalde, and the efforts since to ameliorate gaps and deficiencies in that response, the report released by the Department of Justice is intended to build on the knowledge base for responding to incidents of mass violence. It also identifies generally accepted practices for an effective law enforcement response to such incidents. Finally, the report is intended to help honor the victims and survivors of the Robb Elementary School tragedy.

- **Crime, Violence, Discipline, and Safety in U.S. Public Schools: Findings from the School Survey on Crime and Safety: 2021-22**

*National Center for Education Statistics (January, 2024)*

The National Center for Education Statistics collects data on crime and violence in U.S. public schools through the School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS). This First Look report presents findings from the 2021–22 SSOCS data collection.

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

- **White House, Ed Dept Call for ‘Bold Actions’ to Improve Student Achievement**

*K-12 Dive (January 18, 2024)*

- **Biden Admin. Says New K-12 Agenda Tackles Absenteeism, Tutoring, Extended Learning**

*Education Week (January 17, 2023)*

- **Congress Has a Deal to Expand the Child Tax Credit. Here’s Who Would Benefit**

*CBS News (January 16, 2024)*

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

- **Building Early Literacy Programs:** FutureED will hold a webinar for District leaders to share their experiences in creating early literacy programs.

*Monday at 2pm ET*

- **Policies for Effective School Leader Preparation:** The Learning Policy Institute (LPI) will hold a webinar on “Thriving Leaders, Thriving Schools: Policies for Effective School Leader Preparation.”

*Tuesday at 1:30pm ET*

- **Expanding How We Understand Youth Well-Being**: The Urban Institute will hold a webinar to present domains of youth well-being featured in a series of new products that urges the field to refine how it defines and measures these domains. The session will cover important considerations and guidelines to keep in mind when conceptualizing and measuring well-being for young people.  
*Thursday at 3pm ET*

7. **Future Hearings & Events**

- **Benefits of the District of Columbia’s Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund for Workforce Well-Being and Retention**: The Urban Institute will hold a webinar titled, “Benefits of the District of Columbia’s Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund for Workforce Well-Being and Retention.”  
*February 7 at 1pm ET*

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

- **Senate floor**: Consideration of nominations
- **House floor**: In recess through January 26

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

10. **About BPAG**

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## 1. COSSBA Policy Priorities

### CHILD NUTRITION

#### USDA ANNOUNCES 2024 SUMMER FOOD SERVICE REIMBURSEMENT RATES

The **notice**, published on January 19, informs the public of the annual adjustments to the reimbursement rates for meals served in the Summer Food Service Program. These adjustments address changes in the Consumer Price Index (CPI), as required under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act. The 2024 reimbursement rates are presented as a combined set of rates to highlight simplified cost accounting procedures. The 2024 rates are also presented individually, as separate operating and administrative rates of reimbursement, to show the effect of the CPI adjustment on each rate. On average, the 2024 rate adjustment represents a 5.3 percent increase in the rates from last year.

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## 2. Budget and Appropriations Wrap-Up

Last week, Washington, DC, was plagued by two snowstorms and yet another potential government shutdown. Its denizens were busy all week checking for school and government closure updates, as well as the latest on the potential partial federal government shutdown on Friday. Ultimately, the snowstorms materialized. Thankfully, the shutdown did not.

Once again, the House and Senate passed a short-term extension of government funding, also known as a Continuing Resolution. President Joe Biden signed the measure Friday. This third temporary spending bill will extend current funding to March 1 for four Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 funding bills and to March 8 for the remaining eight bills, including the Labor, Health and

Human Services and Education bill. The Friday snowstorm sped up approval, as House members were eager to leave town before getting stuck.

Extending government funding until early March gives Congress time to work on full-year funding bills, a process that reportedly is not going well. Even though the topline spending numbers were set via a hard-fought agreement, Appropriations Committee leaders have not yet set funding totals for the twelve bills (known as the 302(b) allocations), which is a necessary first step before the Subcommittee leaders start negotiating levels for individual programs. They will have the task of divvying up \$1.7 trillion, with \$886 billion going toward defense spending and \$773 billion allocated for non-defense discretionary programs, like education and other domestic investments. If those figures aren't shared soon, staff may not have the time they need to develop spending bills before the new March deadlines.

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

In the meantime, education advocates are resolved to an education funding bill in which level spending for any particular program will be considered a “win,” but continue to press their case with lawmakers to guard against any increases at other agencies in the massive Labor, Health and Human Services and Education package that would require offsetting cuts to education programs.

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

#### **WHITE HOUSE ANNOUNCES NEW 2024 STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AGENDA**

On Wednesday, the Biden-Harris Administration **announced** its Improving Student Achievement Agenda for 2024 (“Agenda”), which is focused on strategies to accelerate academic performance for all school-aged children. The Agenda plans to utilize several sets of Agency tools, including accountability, reporting, grants, and technical assistance to promote the adoption of three strategies to improve student learning: 1) increasing student attendance; 2) providing high-dosage tutoring; and 3) increasing summer learning and extended or afterschool learning time. “Through the new announcements today, the [Education] Department is using every tool in its toolbox so that States and districts achieve greater adoption of these three proven strategies and accelerate academic progress nationwide. These strategies complement the Administration’s continued focus on improving mental health in schools, supporting America’s teachers and other school staff, and strengthening core instruction through the Raise the Bar: Lead the World initiative,” the White House press release announced. Wednesday’s announcement also confirmed that the Biden-Harris Administration would publish examples of activities from states, districts and education nonprofits that show progress made toward these strategies. In addition, the Administration is urging states to target any school districts with widening achievement gaps, providing them with extra supports and resources. Using existing federal authority, the Education Department also plans to expand its monitoring of states as they implement these strategies to improve student achievement.

#### **CENTER FOR AMERICAN PROGRESS EXAMINES STATE CHILD CARE AGENDAS**

On Thursday, the Center for American Progress (CAP) held a webinar titled, “Building a Comprehensive State Child Care Agenda.” The event featured a panel of experts from CAP’s **Early Childhood Policy team** – Hailey Gibbs, a senior policy analyst; Erin Grant, policy and

outreach specialist; Anna Lovejoy, senior director of state policy; and Allie Schneider, a policy analyst. The policy team examined how individuals, families, and other advocates can utilize CAP resources to push for expanded access to high quality and affordable early education programs. Gibbs highlighted that in 2018, nearly half of American communities qualified as childcare deserts; and nationally, an estimated loss of \$122 billion in earnings, productivity, and tax revenue were attributed to challenges families have securing care for an infant or toddler. Furthermore, although the American Rescue Plan (ARP) allocated \$24 billion to keep childcare provider doors open, the stabilization grants expired at the end of September 2023. According to experts, this will likely result in tuition spikes and could leave childcare programs at risk of closure. Lovejoy added that because Congress has failed to pass any significant funding increases for childcare, it is up to the states to adjust to the crisis. In response, CAP published a [toolkit](#) to help state policymakers advocate for increased investments in childcare and early learning that includes relevant data and new policy options. Notably, Gibbs emphasized that states have a great degree of flexibility in implementing these policies, which may involve allocating resources to reduce enrollment barriers and expanding reimbursements to providers. For example, North Dakota passed legislation providing \$15 million to increase reimbursement rates for those providing infant and toddler care. However, and most importantly, Gibbs noted that the key to supporting any sustainable model for care is the childcare workforce. Providers must offer competitive compensation, benefits, and exceptional work environments to attract a qualified workforce. A recording of the webinar is [here](#).

#### **HUNT INSTITUTE TAKES A LOOK AT SCHOOL CHOICE SENTIMENT, POLICIES IN 2024**

On Thursday, the Hunt Institute hosted a webinar focusing on school choice in 2024. The “Homeroom with Education Leaders” panel featured the Washington, D.C. State Superintendent of Education Dr. Christina Grant; Dr. Patrick Wolf from the University of Arkansas; Dr. David Wells, a researcher with the Grand Canyon Institute; and Dr. Luis Huerta from Columbia University. The panel highlighted results from The Hunt Institute’s [2023 Across the Aisle survey](#), which found that just under half of voters surveyed support using public dollars for school vouchers, and most voters support using public dollars for education savings accounts. These levers for private school choice and their role in the future of public education have been a growing topic of conversation around the country. The panel further discussed the ongoing debate of how school choice affects families, public schools, and rural communities. Grant explored the opportunities and challenges that school choice policy has presented in Washington, DC, and examined how the school choice system in DC can be better leveraged to benefit all communities. Wolf highlighted two recent paradigm shifts in school choice policy: The first being a switch in funding mechanisms from primary vouchers and tax credit scholarships to education saving accounts. Second is the expansion of school choice eligibility for those with unique needs to universal eligibility. Meanwhile, Wells analyzed the Arizona charter school system, explaining that Arizona has the most charter schools outside of Washington, D.C. Wells claimed there is a lack of data showing that charter schools improve student outcomes and criticized charter schools for lacking accountability when compared to the oversight and scrutiny that public school systems receive. A recording of the webinar will be posted [here](#).

#### **HOUSE HEARING FOCUSES ON STUDENTS IN A SKILLS-BASED ECONOMY**

On Thursday, the House Education and the Workforce Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education Subcommittee held a [hearing](#) on preparing students for success in the

skills-based economy. In contrast to the high-profile education-related hearings of late, the proceeding displayed bipartisan sentiment on challenges and solutions to closing America’s 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills gap. Both sides of the aisle agreed that there should be more attention paid to federal investment in K-12 Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs, in conjunction with industry collaboration and partnership. While specific legislative measures were not often highlighted, several Members did call for an increase in federal **Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act** dollars for states and school districts. Subcommittee Chair Aaron Bean (R-FL) asserted that negative stigmas surrounding CTE are contributing to a growing skills gap in America and applauded employers and industry for their efforts to close the skills gap, such as removing degree requirements for certain job applicants and implementing skills-first hiring approaches. Subcommittee Ranking Member Suzanne Bonnamici (D-OR) outlined data showing that CTE is valuable in keeping students in schools, particularly those with a high risk of dropping out. She further admired the Department of Education’s investment in CTE programming via its “**Raise the Bar**” initiative and partnerships with the Departments of Labor and Energy. The witness panel detailed their professional experience promoting CTE in schools, working to expand access to programs, and destigmatizing skills-based trade professions. A full memo on the hearing prepared by BPAG is [here](#).

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

##### **Critical Incident Review: Active Shooter at Robb Elementary School**

*United States Department of Justice* (January, 2024)

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*Education Week* (January 17, 2023)

##### **Congress has a Deal to Expand the Child Tax Credit. Here’s Who Would Benefit**

*CBS News* (January 16, 2024)



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## THIS WEEK IN WASHINGTON

### 6. Weekly Calendar

#### Monday, January 22, 2024

##### **Webinar: Building Early Literacy Programs**

**Subject:** FutureED will hold a webinar for District leaders to share their experiences in creating early literacy programs.

**Participants:** Melissa Damaschke, assistant principal, Knapp Elementary, Racine Unified School District; Richard Wytonick, Principal, Knapp Elementary, Racine Unified School District; Janelle Decker, acting academic officer, Racine Unified School District; Janice Silver, Ed.D., education advisor, Panorama Education

**Time:** 2:00 p.m.

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

#### Tuesday, January 23, 2024

##### **Event: Thriving Leaders, Thriving Schools: Policies for Effective School Leader Preparation**

**Subject:** This Learning Policy Institute and EdPrepLab-hosted event will focus on preparing and developing effective school leaders for school transformation and will explore effective policy efforts that can help increase access to high-quality, comprehensive school leader preparation and development programs. Leading experts on educator preparation policy and practice will share examples and discuss research-based approaches to school leader preparation.

**Participants:** Danny Carlson, chief of staff, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, U.S. Department of Education; Rebecca Cheung, assistant dean, University of California, Berkeley School of Education Leadership Development programs; Linda Darling-Hammond, president and CEO, Learning Policy Institute; Charles E. Ducommun professor of education emeritus, Stanford University; Aman Dhanda, chief engagement officer, National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP); Will Jordan, research officer, The Wallace Foundation; Marjorie Wechsler, principal research manager, Learning Policy Institute

**Time:** 1:30 p.m. – 3 p.m.

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

#### Thursday, January 25, 2024

##### **Webinar: Expanding How We Understand Youth Well-Being**

**Subject:** The Urban Institute will hold a webinar to present domains of youth well-being featured in a series of new products that urges the field to refine how it defines and measures these domains. The session will cover important considerations and guidelines to keep in mind when conceptualizing and measuring well-being for young people.

**Participants:** Amelia Coffey, senior research associate, Center on Labor, Human Services, and Population, Urban Institute; Hannah Sumiko Daly, research associate, Center on Labor, Human Services, and Population, Urban Institute; Florencia Gutierrez, senior research associate, Annie E. Casey Foundation; Kathryn L.S. Pettit, senior fellow, Metropolitan Housing and Communities Policy Center, Urban Institute; Juan D. Martinez Pineda (Zapoteca/The Cloud People), director,

Fresh Tracks and senior program manager, Forum for Community Solutions, The Aspen Institute; Kimberly Spring, director, Research and Evaluation, Annie E. Casey Foundation  
**Time:** 3:00 p.m.

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

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## 7. Future Hearings and Events

### Wednesday, February 7, 2024

#### **Webinar: Benefits of the District of Columbia’s Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund for Workforce Well-Being and Retention**

**Subject:** The Urban Institute will hold a webinar titled, “Benefits of the District of Columbia’s Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund for Workforce Well-Being and Retention.”

**Participants:** Justin B. Doromal, senior research associate, Urban Institute; Erica Greenberg, senior fellow and co–principal investigator, District of Columbia Child Care Policy Research Partnership, Urban Institute; Laura Jimenez Parra, research associate, Urban Institute; Sara Mead, deputy superintendent of early learning, District of Columbia Office of the State Superintendent of Education; Heather Sandstrom, senior fellow and principal investigator, District of Columbia Child Care Policy Research Partnership, Urban Institute

**Time:** 1:00 p.m.

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

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## 8. On The Floor of Congress This Week

**Senate Floor:** Consideration of nominations

**House Floor:** In recess through January 26.

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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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