



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

**FEBRUARY 12, 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**
  - **Broadband Connectivity and E-Rate**
    - **Biden Administration Will End Enrollment in Affordable Internet Program as Funding Runs Low**  
*The Hill (February 6, 2024)*
2. **Budget and Appropriations Wrap-up**
  - **Impact on State School Board Associations**
3. **In Brief – Last Week in Washington**
  - **STEM Leaders Panel Looks at Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Belonging:** On Tuesday, *Education Week* cohosted a webinar with Project Lead The Way (PLTW) on “Driving Innovation Through Inclusive STEM Education” to explore strategies that educators, administrators, and students can implement to foster inclusive learning spaces in STEM education.
  - **Urban Institute Examines DC Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund:** On Wednesday, the Urban Institute held a webinar titled, “Benefits of the District of Columbia’s Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund for Workforce Well-Being and Retention.”
  - **AEI Event Examines Post-Pandemic Chronic Absenteeism:** On Thursday, the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) hosted a webinar titled, “Chronic Absenteeism after the Pandemic.” The event featured a presentation provided by

Dr. Nat Malkus, deputy director of education policy studies for AEI, during which he showcased his research into post-pandemic chronic absenteeism.

#### 4. New Publications

- **Long COVID for Public Schools: Chronic Absenteeism Before and After the Pandemic**

*American Enterprise Institute (January, 2024)*

This report documents chronic absenteeism over the COVID-19 pandemic. Drawing on the AEI's Return to Learn Tracker Chronic Absenteeism Data Collection, the most comprehensive and current data collection on pandemic and post-pandemic chronic absenteeism, the report shows that pandemic increases in chronic absenteeism were widespread during the pandemic.

- **K-12 Education: Education Could Enhance Oversight of School Improvement Activities**

*US Government Accountability Office (January, 2024)*

Roughly 2.5 million students attend a K-12 public school that their state has identified for comprehensive support and improvement (CSI) under Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (ESEA). GAO found that CSI schools are among the lowest-performing schools in the nation. GAO also found that compared to other public schools, CSI schools are much more likely to serve predominantly Black and low-income students and those who are not proficient in reading or math. CSI schools also have higher student-teacher ratios than other schools.

#### 5. In the News

- **White House to Work with Pro Athletes to Promote Physical Activity, Fight Hunger**

*The Washington Post (February 8, 2024)*

- **A Career Prep Bill Get Bipartisan Support in the Senate. What's In It?**

*Education Week (February 7, 2024)*

- **K-12 Cybersecurity Policies are Gaining Momentum. Is It Enough?**

*K-12 Dive (February 5, 2024)*

- **Absenteeism Was a Big Problem in This District. A New Strategy Is Getting Results**

*Education Week (February 5, 2024)*

- **Biden Officials Advance Plan to Blow Up Trump's Rules on Sexual Misconduct in Schools**

*Politico (February 3, 2024)*

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

- **NSF Committee on Equal Opportunities in Science and Engineering:** The National Science Foundation will hold a meeting of the Committee on Equal Opportunities in Science and Engineering, February 12-13. Agenda includes: Discussion - 2023 CEOSE Report on Rural STEM; Presentation: Report of the CEOSE Executive Liaison; Presentation: NSF Response to the 2022 Envisioning the Future of NSF EPSCoR Report Recommendations and the CHIPS and Science Act Requirements; Discussion: Reports of the CEOSE AC Liaisons.

*Monday at 1pm ET*

- **Parent Activism, Partisan Politics, and the Battle for Public Education:** Politics and Prose Bookstore will hold a book discussion on "School Moms: Parent Activism, Partisan Politics, and the Battle for Public Education."

*Tuesday at 7pm ET*

7. **Future Hearings & Events**

- **Bipartisan Priorities for Helping Families in 2024:** The R Street Institute will hold a virtual meeting on "Bipartisan Priorities for Helping Families in 2024," focusing on reforming tax bills for families, improving telehealth access, and ensuring labor flexibility for working parents.  
*February 20 at 10am ET*
- **Scaling Earn and Learn Opportunities:** The Brookings Institution will hold a webinar on "How can we scale earn-and-learn opportunities? Lessons learned from 3 pioneering states."  
*February 21 at 2pm ET*
- **A Bolder Vision for Latino Education:** Latinos for Education will hold a webinar to examine the state of higher education for the Latino community.  
*February 21 at 6pm ET*
- **Leveraging ESSER Funds for Afterschool and Summer Learning:** The Afterschool Alliance will hold a webinar for a presentation on the recently released report "Investments in Student Recovery: A Review of School Districts' Use of American Rescue Plan Funding to Support Afterschool and Summer Opportunities."  
*February 22 at 2pm ET*

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

- **Senate floor:** H.R. 815, legislative vehicle for National Security Act, 2024
- **House floor:**
  - **H. Res. 863** – Impeaching Alejandro Nicholas Mayorkas, Secretary of Homeland Security, for high crimes and misdemeanors, as amended
  - **H.R. 7176** – Unlocking our Domestic LNG Potential Act of 2024

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

10. **About BPAG**

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## 1. COSSBA Policy Priorities

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

#### **BIDEN ADMINISTRATION WILL END ENROLLMENT IN AFFORDABLE INTERNET PROGRAM AS FUNDING RUNS LOW**

*The Hill* (February 6, 2024)

The Biden administration will halt enrollment in a program that provides broadband discounts to millions of Americans as it runs low on funds and prepares to wind down in the coming months. The Affordable Connectivity Program stopped accepting new enrollments at 11:59 p.m. ET February 7, a White House spokesperson confirmed. [Read more.](#)

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

Last week, the Senate publicly dealt with the politically fraught issue of border security along an aid package for conflicts in Ukraine and Israel; House Republicans attempted to impeach the Secretary of Homeland Security and maligned the Senate's efforts on addressing the border. Work on spending bills hardly made news while, behind closed doors, negotiations on program funding levels for the twelve FY 2024 appropriations packages continued. The Senate was meant to be in recess for the next two weeks, but instead remained in town this week to consider foreign aid legislation. The House will be in session this week, and both chambers are out next week. And the Friday of the following week is yet another deadline for action on spending bills that could force a potential partial federal government shutdown. (The following Friday—March 8<sup>th</sup>—is the deadline for action on the Labor, Health and Human Services and Education spending bill before forcing potential closures of those and other agencies.)

While staff are working on the numbers, this week, House Appropriations Committee Ranking Member Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) told reporters that negotiations have not yet begun on the new policy riders included in the bills marked up last year by the Appropriations Committees, and she sees those as the more difficult matters to resolve. Further, those issues will have to be resolved by Members—not staff. In recent years, appropriations bills have ended up keeping existing policy riders and not adding new ones. However, some conservatives are likely to keep pushing for inclusion of new conservative policy riders, at least in part, because they lost their campaign to cut FY 2024 funding by much more. That means more time will be needed to complete the bills.

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

Education advocates continue to remind allies on Capitol Hill of the importance of investing in various programs, knowing that even their best of friends are facing difficult decisions. Last week, observers opined that legislators and their staff were working hard to resolve FY 2024

spending before the two March deadlines. That task is looking increasingly daunting, and there is unlikely to be much more news on progress until the week of February 26<sup>th</sup>.

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

### **STEM LEADERS PANEL LOOKS AT DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, BELONGING**

On Tuesday, *Education Week* cohosted a webinar with Project Lead The Way (PLTW) on “Driving Innovation Through Inclusive STEM Education” to explore strategies that educators, administrators, and students can implement to foster inclusive learning spaces in STEM education. The webinar featured a panel of experts, including Yolanda Payne, a research associate for the Georgia Institute of Technology and intervention education fellow with the Society for Science; Dr. Sonal Patel, program manager for digital learning and computer science education with the San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools (SBCSS); Dr. Glenda Flores, associate professor of Chicano and Latino studies for the University of California, Irvine (UC Irvine), and Theresa Hall, senior vice president of customer operation at PLTW. The panel examined the benefits of STEM inclusion and diversity, examples of positive outcomes from inclusive STEM learning, successful diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) programs, and methods educators can use to cultivate more inclusive environments. Payne and Dr. Flores spoke to their positive experiences with inclusive STEM education, while Dr. Patel cited Jan Margolis’ book, “[Stuck in the Shallow End: Education, Race, and Computing](#),” which dives into why so few Black and Latinx students study computer science and posits that inclusive environments foster a sense of belonging for all students. The panel additionally discussed the increased level of satisfaction and engagement they observed in underrepresented students when they engaged in intentional DEIB-focused STEM programs. Regarding specific DEIB programs, Dr. Flores endorsed the [UC PRIME Pre-Health Pathways](#) at UC Irvine, a program that aids underrepresented students in building pre-med networks, while Yolanda pointed to [Society for Science](#), the [US Patent and Trademark Office](#), and the [Computer Science Teachers Association](#) (CSTA) as good resources for inclusive STEM initiatives for students. Dr. Patel expanded on these, detailing the quality training that the [CSTA Equity Fellowship Network](#) provides to teachers on STEM equity, similar to California’s [Seasons of CS](#). The webinar ended with a discussion on strategies teachers can utilize to improve inclusivity in their classrooms, which Hall stated is vital to prevent students from self-selecting out of STEM programs. A recording of the webinar can be found [here](#).

### **URBAN INSTITUTE EXAMINES DC EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR PAY EQUITY FUND**

On Wednesday, the Urban Institute held a webinar titled, “Benefits of the District of Columbia’s Early Childhood Educator Pay Equity Fund for Workforce Well-Being and Retention.” The event featured a panel of Urban Institute researchers – Justin Doromal, Erica Greenberg, Laura Jimenez Parra, and Heather Sandstrom – along with Sara Mead of the DC Office of the State Superintendent of Education. Established in 2021 with the goal of achieving pay parity between DC public school teachers and licensed child care programs, [DC’s Early Childhood Pay Equity Fund](#) (PEF) has become a pivotal force in reshaping the landscape of early childhood education. During this virtual event, the Urban Institute presented the findings of their [study](#) analyzing the effect that the PEF had on educators. Notably, the survey results revealed that over 85 percent of eligible educators thought the process for applying and receiving the funds was either easy or very easy. In addition, Parra provided details on how the PEF has contributed to alleviating financial stress among educators and fostering a sense of appreciation. Expanding on the broader

impact, Doromal shared that the PEF advances early childhood education workforce goals by improving staff recruitment and retention, expanding pay parity, and improving the quality of care in the district. Mead also highlighted the transition for fiscal year (FY) 2024, which shifts from direct payments to educators to a more structured distribution model via child development facilities. Furthermore, Mead discussed concerns raised by educators about potential loss of benefits, particularly Medicaid, due to increased compensation. To address this, she talked about their partnership with the district’s health benefits exchange and the implementation of the [HealthCare4ChildCare Program](#) – an initiative aimed at preserving essential benefits for educators. While the PEF is still in its infancy, the researchers concluded by expressing their enthusiasm for the PEF and its promising prospects for the future. A recording of the webinar is [here](#).

### **AEI EVENT EXAMINES POST-PANDEMIC CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM**

On Thursday, the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) hosted a webinar titled, “Chronic Absenteeism after the Pandemic.” The event featured a presentation provided by Dr. Nat Malkus, deputy director of education policy studies for AEI, during which he showcased his research into post-pandemic chronic absenteeism. Nationwide, chronic absenteeism—the percentage of students missing at least 10 percent of a school year—surged from 15 percent in 2018 to 29 percent in 2022 and remained 72 percent above the pre-pandemic baseline in 2023. Following Dr. Malkus’ remarks, a panel of experts further examined the issue and considered possible solutions. Participants included Hedy Chang, executive director of Attendance Works; Lisa Coons, superintendent of public instruction for the Virginia Department of Education; Michael Gottfried, a professor for the University of Pennsylvania’s Graduate School of Education; and Scott Rocco, superintendent of the Hamilton Township School District. Malkus pointed to a [Return2Learn tracker on chronic absenteeism](#) that shows attendance has worsened across all demographics. Gottfried linked the rise in chronic absenteeism to health concerns, a lack of student engagement, and disrupted household routines and encouraged education leaders to send positive, not punitive, messages to students about returning to class. Chang further articulated the pressing issue by conveying challenges resulting from an abrupt messaging shift from encouraging children to stay home during the pandemic to urging their return. Rocco discussed his personal experiences as a superintendent, underscoring the struggle students face after missing big transition periods and referenced his district's efforts to increase school attendance post-pandemic. Rocco additionally stated that technology is no substitute for classroom instruction and that the push to come back to school must come from all levels of the community, including family, teachers, and district leaders. Coons highlighted the state of Virginia’s efforts to get kids back into school, including public messaging and connecting teachers, principals and superintendents on best strategies. In her view, the message, “Attendance Matters,” is a strong and simple statement that should be amplified as much as possible. A recording of the webinar is [here](#).

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### **3. New Publications**

[Long COVID for Public Schools: Chronic Absenteeism Before and After the Pandemic](#)  
*American Enterprise Institute* (January, 2024)

This report documents chronic absenteeism over the COVID-19 pandemic. Drawing on the AEI’s Return to Learn Tracker Chronic Absenteeism Data Collection, the most comprehensive

and current data collection on pandemic and post-pandemic chronic absenteeism, the report shows that pandemic increases in chronic absenteeism were widespread during the pandemic.

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## **4. In the News**

### **White House to Work with Pro Athletes to Promote Physical Activity, Fight Hunger**

*The Washington Post (February 8, 2024)*

### **A Career Prep Bill Gets Bipartisan Support in the Senate. What's in It?**

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*Education Week (February 5, 2024)*

### **Biden Officials Advance Plan to Blow Up Trump's Rules on Sexual Misconduct in Schools**

*Politico (February 3, 2024)*

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## **THIS WEEK IN WASHINGTON**

### **5. Weekly Calendar**

#### **Monday, February 12, 2024**

##### **Agency Meeting: NSF Committee on Equal Opportunities in Science and Engineering**

**Subject:** The National Science Foundation will hold a meeting of the Committee on Equal Opportunities in Science and Engineering, February 12-13. Agenda includes: Discussion - 2023 CEOSE Report on Rural STEM; Presentation: Report of the CEOSE Executive Liaison; Presentation: NSF Response to the 2022 Envisioning the Future of NSF EPSCoR Report Recommendations and the CHIPS and Science Act Requirements; Discussion: Reports of the CEOSE AC Liaisons.

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

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

## **Tuesday, February 13, 2024**

### **Event: Parent Activism, Partisan Politics, and the Battle for Public Education**

**Subject:** Politics and Prose Bookstore will hold a book discussion on "School Moms: Parent Activism, Partisan Politics, and the Battle for Public Education."

**Participants:** Laura Pappano, former education columnist, *The Boston Globe*.

**Time and Location:** 7:00 p.m.; Politics and Prose, 5015 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C.

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

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## **6. Future Hearings and Events**

## **Tuesday, February 20, 2024**

### **Webinar: Bipartisan Priorities for Helping Families in 2024**

**Subject:** The R Street Institute will hold a virtual meeting on "Bipartisan Priorities for Helping Families in 2024," focusing on reforming tax bills for families, improving telehealth access, and ensuring labor flexibility for working parents.

**Participants:** Sabrina Schaeffer, vice president of public affairs, R Street Institute; Tim Carney, senior fellow, American Enterprise Institute; Courtney Joslin, resident fellow, R Street Institute's Project for Women and Families; and Jacob Bastian, assistant professor of economics, Rutgers University.

**Time:** 10:00 a.m.

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

## **Wednesday, February 21, 2024**

### **Webinar: Scaling Earn and Learn Opportunities**

**Subject:** The Brookings Institution will hold a webinar on "How can we scale earn-and-learn opportunities? Lessons learned from 3 pioneering states."

**Participants:** Josh Laney, director, Alabama Office of Apprenticeship; Marie Mackintosh, President and CEO of EmployIndy; Annelies Goger, fellow, Brookings Metro; and Ryan Gensler, executive vice president, CareerWise USA.

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

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

### **Webinar: A Bolder Vision for Latino Education**

**Subject:** Latinos for Education will hold a webinar to examine the state of higher education for the Latino community.

**Participants:** Rep. Joaquin Castro (D-TX); Amanda Fernandez, CEO, Latinos for Education; and Suzanne Gamboa, senior reporter, NBC News.

**Time:** 6:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

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

## **Thursday, February 22, 2024**

### **Webinar: Leveraging ESSER Funds for Afterschool and Summer Learning**

**Subject:** The Afterschool Alliance will hold a webinar for a presentation on the recently released report "Investments in Student Recovery: A Review of School Districts' Use of American Rescue Plan Funding to Support Afterschool and Summer Opportunities."



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

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

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## 7. On The Floor of Congress This Week

**Senate Floor:** [H.R. 815](#), legislative vehicle for National Security Act, 2024

### House Floor:

[H. Res. 863](#) – Impeaching Alejandro Nicholas Mayorkas, Secretary of Homeland Security, for high crimes and misdemeanors, as amended

[H.R. 7176](#) – Unlocking our Domestic LNG Potential Act of 2024

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## 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](#)

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## 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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