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As the school year is now well under way and the Illinois legislature is scheduled to return to Springfield soon for the annual Veto Session, the Catholic Conference of Illinois' (CCI) education e-newsletter is back. Let's get started.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

The descriptions of the following bills were included in my summer legislative report, but as they do introduce some changes, and I want to be sure you are aware of them, here they are again:

SB 2934 – This new law first sought to allow the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) to make school security grants to public schools, K-12. CCI engaged IEMA representatives and the bill's sponsor, and they agreed to an amendment allowing IEMA to also make school security grants to nonpublic schools, K-12. The bill was approved by the entire Senate on April 1st. The bill passed the House unanimously on May 9th and was signed by the Governor on June 23rd. The grants will be awarded through a competitive application. It is up to the administration when these school security grants will be funded. When they become available, you will be alerted.

SB 2710 – CCI negotiated this bill with the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and the State Fire Marshal. It requires state recognized nonpublic schools to hold an annual meeting to review the school's crisis plan. ISBE attempted a similar effort through administrative rule last year without regard to the nature of nonpublic schools. We pushed that effort back and replaced it with this negotiated bill. The bill passed the Senate Education Committee unanimously on February 19th, and on March 20th an amendment was approved to stipulate that no individual or agency could charge a school for participating in the review. The bill was approved by the entire Senate on April 1st. The bill passed the House unanimously on May 8th and was signed by the Governor on June 23rd.

HB 4262 – This new law effectively removes the requirement that new public school employees undergo a TB test. Now that it has become law, we have begun the process with ISBE to affect a change in the administrative rules for state recognition of nonpublic schools so that our new employees will no longer be required to undergo TB tests. It is important to note that TB testing for day care workers and pre-school teachers is still required. The bill passed the full House on March 5th, the Senate on May 20th and was signed by the Governor on July 16th.

HB 3724 – This bill requires health education in secondary schools to include training (not certification) on how to properly administer cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and how to use an automated external defibrillator. Be clear on the requirements: training not certification. And there is no requirement that this training be linked to graduation, so you can phase in the training in a grade or grades as you see fit. The bill passed the House on April 1st, the Senate on May 20th and was signed by the Governor on June 5th.

HB 5892 – This new law provides for the administration of undesignated epinephrine auto-injectors (undesignated = owned by the school) by a pupil, school nurse, and trained personnel. The school nurse or other trained personnel can administer the undesignated epi-pens to students with plans or prescriptions on file or to any student the nurse or trained personnel believes in good faith is having an anaphylactic reaction. It is not a mandate that schools carry undesignated epinephrine auto-injectors or train school personnel. The new law simply allows for it. If undertaken, the law stipulates designated personnel must submit to the school's administration proof of completion of a training curriculum to recognize and respond to anaphylaxis.

The new law also requires a school to permit students with a valid prescription and parental permission to self-administration and self-carry asthma medication. (The law already allows this for epinephrine auto-injectors if the student also has a doctor's note.)

CCI engaged the sponsor of the bill to ensure the liability protections for staff were improved, and they agreed to an amendment. In summary, this bill allows for (but does not mandate) quicker application of needed medicine and now provides strong liability protections. The bill passed the House on April 10th, the Senate on May 28th and was signed by the Governor on July 30th.

SCHOOL CHOICE

CCI continues to coordinate with Ed Choice Illinois (formerly Freedom to Learn) in efforts to support school choice. Ed Choice Illinois has asked us to participate in the creation of policy proposals and marketing strategies, and we have spent this summer participating in that work. The first policy proposal was released in early August and is a form of the scholarship tax credit that CCI has long advocated. For the near future Ed Choice Illinois will be the lead voice in Illinois for school choice, and we will be collaborating partners. This group is able to make allies and incorporate political strategies that are not available to the Church, so their work is invaluable and important.

In the meantime, on September 25th, the Archdiocese of Chicago planned and carried out numerous rallies across Cook and Lake Counties in support of school choice. Thousands of people participated in these rallies, and they successfully raised the profile of this issue in their area. We hope that these energies will be combined with the policy planning we are doing with Ed Choice Illinois.

ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATE

State Recognition & the Illinois State Board of Recognition (ISBE) – Please remember the November 15, 2014, deadline for submitting the (1) Nonpublic Registration, Enrollment and Staff Report, (2) Immunization Data and (3) Nonpublic School Application for State Recognition and School Calendar. These forms must be completed and submitted on time in order to extend your school's state recognition status from December 31, 2014 to December 31, 2015. The deadline cannot be missed.

Nonpublic Registration, Enrollment and Staff Report – This report typically becomes available on the IWAS system around October 1st. Completed reports must be received by ISBE no later than November 15, 2014. Nonpublic schools that have registered with ISBE at least once in the past must submit their data online via IWAS. Schools that have never registered must submit their data using the paper form:

http://www.isbe.net/research/htmls/np_entity.htm.

Immunization Data Report -- This report also typically becomes available on the IWAS system around October 1st. Completed reports must be received by ISBE no later than November 15, 2014.

Nonpublic School Application for State Recognition and School Calendar – This IWAS system usually opens about a week later, but it is still due November 15, 2014. As was the case last year, ISBE will include an affirmation checklist in the application that was typically part of the probe document. My office sent guidance to you on how to complete the checklist last year. If you need the guidance again, please let me know.

PLEASE REMEMBER that the order in which these forms are done is important! The immunization data and the Nonpublic Registration, Enrollment and Staff Report must be completed and submitted BEFORE the Nonpublic School Application for State Recognition and School Calendar can be submitted on IWAS.

Administrator/Teacher Licensure & Professional Development – In mid-July, ISBE proposed new rules for administrator and teacher licensure and requirements for their professional development. Although the rules do not impede the licensure and licensure renewal of our teachers and administrators, and in fact will help administrators and teachers track their licensure status and professional development through ELIS, they do define the status of our teacher licenses as valid and exempt and remove the status of our diocesan offices as “approved” providers of professional development. The practical effects of the new rules are not overly significant (the licenses are still valid; we can still do professional development), but the perception is not great. We submitted public comments to ISBE on the rules and continue to explore options for going forward.

Illinois Catholic Advocacy Network (I-CAN) – CCI has adopted this new technology to improve our advocacy efforts in Springfield across the board. Our Principal and Legislative Action Person (LAP) email lists are now housed in the I-CAN database and our action alerts are better designed and MUCH easier to act on. In fact, after receiving an action alert through the I-CAN network, you will now be able to send a pre-drafted email to you state representative and state senator in as little as three clicks and under a minute. It can't be beat!

I-CAN is a grassroots advocacy email network, and the best news is you do not have to be a principal or LAP to sign up for ICAN. If you care about Catholic schools (or any other issues the Church speaks on), you can sign up today and be an informed and active participant. When signing up for I-CAN you will be asked for both an email address and home address so we can pinpoint your state lawmakers. You will also be allowed to sign up for specific issue areas, so that you can receive alerts on issues you care about and not for those you don't.

Please click <http://capwiz.com/ilcatholic/mlm/signup/>, and fill out the form. CCI does the rest. Thank you for this important help – it is our only method for influencing public policy debates in Springfield.

Blue Ribbon Schools

Just yesterday, the United States Department of Education promulgated its list of Blue Ribbon Schools for 2014. Founded in 1982, the National Blue Ribbon Schools Program recognizes public and private elementary, middle, and high schools where students perform at very high levels or

where significant improvements are being made in students' academic achievement. In Illinois, nine Catholic schools were awarded the Blue Ribbon:

- Holy Cross School – Deerfield, IL
- Prince of Peace Catholic School –Lake Villa, IL
- St. Cletus Elementary School – La Grange, IL
- St. Hubert School – Hoffman Estates, IL
- St. John the Evangelist School – Streamwood, IL
- St. Mary School – Buffalo Grove, IL
- St. Viator High School – Arlington Heights, IL
- Sts. Faith Hope Charity Catholic School – Winnetka, IL
- The High School of St Thomas More –Champaign, IL

Thank you all for all that you do. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

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