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I hope this newsletter finds you well and your school year humming along. The weather has finally turned, and summer seems just around the corner. But just as you have the school year to complete, work in the legislature remains. The legislature has been going strong for four months and has little over one month until adjournment. There is a lot going on, so let's get right into it.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

STATE

Textbook Funding – CCI found legislators in both chambers to reintroduce legislation providing funding for the textbook block grant (formerly textbook loan). The bills are **House Bill 2321**, introduced by Representative Kelly Burke (D-Oak Lawn), and **Senate Bill 2152**, introduced by Senator Bill Cunningham (D-Chicago). We have also worked to line up co-sponsors; we currently have 7 co-sponsors in the House and 9 co-sponsors in the Senate.

On March 20, 2013, the Catholic school superintendents traveled to Springfield and met with Senate President John Cullerton, Speaker Mike Madigan, Minority Leader Christine Radogno and Minority Leader Tom Cross to discuss the general state of Catholic education and request funding for the textbook block grant.

CCI will issue action alerts to schools and LAPs in early May to support our advocacy for this funding through the budget making process. Do not lose heart! We need your participation in these action alerts, or they are certainly doomed to failure.

Insurance Mandate for High School Student Athletes – Last November, CCI defeated a legislative initiative (**House Bill 603**) that would have imposed an expensive new mandate on public and nonpublic schools by requiring they purchase catastrophic health insurance plans for student athletes with aggregate benefits of \$7.5 million or 15 years. These benefit limits are far in excess of what our school plans typically hold.

This issue resurfaced in the spring session of the General Assembly through identical bills, **House Bill 127** and **Senate Bill 2178**. On March 21st, CCI testified in opposition to **House Bill 127** and the House Elementary and Secondary Education Committee voted the bill down. However, the Senate Bill was approved by the Senate Insurance Committee and moved to the full Senate. CCI issued a letter to all State Senators explaining our opposition to the bill and lobbied against it.

In response, the sponsor of the bill worked out a compromise with us. An amendment was agreed to that requires public and private high schools to either:

- carry a \$3 million or 5 year catastrophic health insurance policy (down from \$7.5 million or 15 years) for student athletes participating in IHSA sports,

OR

- require student athletes participating in IHSA sports to be covered under an individual or group policy of accident and health insurance (i.e. their parents private insurance).

So, if your school requires student athletes to have health insurance before participating in IHSA sports, you are exempt from the catastrophic health insurance coverage mandate.

The bill further requires IHSA to provide a group policy of the catastrophic health insurance coverage to public and private schools. From conversations I have had with IHSA, I anticipate coverage in this group policy will cost less than \$5 a student. So, if you do not want to require student athletes to have health insurance, you will be able to purchase the necessary coverage from IHSA at a relatively low cost. As amended, the bill passed the Senate and now heads to the House.

House Bill 2944 – This legislation, filed by freshmen Representative Scott Drury (D-Highwood), sought to allow nonpublic school students to take the state’s standardized tests at the local public school if the student’s parent or guardian elects. The bill also allows the local public schools to charge a reasonable fee for administering the tests to nonpublic school students. The bill does not mandate participation in the state’s tests. Public school groups are opposing the bill. CCI raised concerns about the logistics and the ability of districts to charge otherwise taxpaying families for the state assessment. Ultimately, the bill was not called for a vote.

School Safety Drill Act – ISBE and the State Fire Marshal’s Office recently proposed a new administrative rulemaking requiring state-recognized nonpublic schools to conform with a section of the School Safety Drill Act that we are exempt from in statute. The section in question requires an annual meeting with local first responders to evaluate the school’s crisis planning. CCI objected to the new rule-making – not due to its substance, as our schools already conduct such meetings voluntarily – but due to the process. We do not believe administrative rulemaking, particularly rulemaking proposed under the auspices of the cooperative state recognition program, should be the source of new regulation not sanctioned in state statute. CCI organized opposition during the initial public comment period, and the proposed rules have been withdrawn. On March 26, CCI participated in a conference call with ISBE and State Fire Marshal representatives to discuss options for moving forward on this issue legislatively. We may support a bill requiring the annual review meeting for state recognized nonpublic schools if we can agree on language. You are already conducting these meetings, so there should be no impact on your operations.

House Bill 492 – This legislation, sponsored by Representative Linda Chapa LaVia (D-Aurora), amends the School Safety Drill Act to require that the one annual law enforcement drill already required focuses on a school shooting incident. The school will be required to invite participation of a local law enforcement agency. To be clear, this legislation does not require a new drill; it provides that the already required law enforcement drill will focus on how to react to a school shooting incident. The bill passed the House but is hung up on a motion to reconsider the vote. This motion will have to be disposed of before the bill can go to the Senate.

House Bill 3190 – This legislation, sponsored by Representative JoAnn Osmond (R-Gurnee), amends the School Code and the Communicable Disease Prevention Act and requires that, beginning July 1, 2014, upon entering the 6th and 12th grade of any public, private, or parochial school, a student shall present to the school proof of having received an (meningitis) immunization containing meningococcal conjugate vaccine. The bill passed the House and has reached the Senate. An amendment has been filed that, if adopted, could delay the implementation of the act.

FEDERAL

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) – Responding to our many requests, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) finally agreed to implement a more practical timeline for identifying students with disabilities in nonpublic schools and engaging in timely and meaningful consultation with nonpublic school administrators and families.

In the past, this process has occurred in the fall of each school year not allowing adequate time to design a service plan for students and often delaying that plan's implementation until well into the school year. In order to change this and ensure there are no delays in service provision to students, the TMC timelines have been revised effective with the 2013-2014 school year:

- April 2013: Release of estimated IDEA nonpublic proportionate share calculations (based on child count data from the FACTS March transmission)
- May 31, 2013: Final date for convening timely and meaningful consultations
- June 15, 2013: Timely and meaningful documents are due to the Special Education Services division
- July 1, 2013: Earliest start date for FY14 IDEA grants. Districts with nonpublic proportionate share calculations must include those expenses for approval of grants
- August 2013: Final nonpublic proportionate share calculations released

School districts have been notified of this change and should be proactive in setting up timely and meaningful consultation meetings with nonpublic schools and their families. Please ensure the new timeline is adhered to locally.

ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATES

Teacher Licensure – As many of you know, ISBE launched a new educator licensure system July 1, and it will impact everyone with certificates. In short, the state is moving from 60 types of educator certificates and endorsements to just three licenses. Educators will not lose any of their credentials or endorsements in this transition, there is no cost to educators associated with this change and the difference in each individual's license will show up automatically on ISBE's website July 1. There will be more information in the coming weeks but you can learn more about this change on ISBE's Educator Certification page and specifically at this short webinar: http://www.brainshark.com/IllinoisPrincipalsAssoc/isbe_exchange.

State Recognition & ISBE – A number of nonpublic schools missed the new November 15, 2012, 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. CCI was able to work out a deal with ISBE ensuring those schools that missed the deadline were not stripped of state recognition. They were placed on a one year probationary status and as long as all submissions are made on time next year, they will be restored to full recognition.

About 35 state recognition visits to nonpublic schools have been scheduled for 2012-13 school year, and they are ongoing. We have been in talks with ISBE about different ways of increasing the number of visits next year in an effort to clear the backlog of state recognition visits, but there is nothing final to report at this time.

Thank you all for your attention to these matters. As always, if you have any questions please email (wichmann@ilcatholic.org) or call (217-528-9200). Please be on the lookout for the forthcoming action alerts on textbooks. May God bless you and your school's important work.