

## DKGNJ Legislative Update May 15, 2024

The following information was received from the Government Relations department of NJEA.

**The legislature is back in session and sent the evaluation task force bill and bills to restore school funding to the governor's desk. The school funding bills were signed yesterday, May 14.**

- **A3413/S2082** - Establishes New Jersey Educator Evaluation Review Task Force; clarifies collection of student growth data.
- **A4059/S3002** - Requires Commissioner of Education to permit certain school districts losing State school aid to submit budgets after enactment of FY 2025 appropriations act.
- **A4161/S3081** - Establishes Stabilized School Budget Aid Grant Program to restore certain portions of State school aid reductions; permits certain school districts to exceed tax levy growth limitation in 2024-2025 school year; appropriates \$44.7 million.

In addition to the information on school funding, please [take action on funding for our community colleges!](#)

### School Aid Saga

As happened last year, state aid numbers were a complete surprise in some districts who found themselves losing much more than expected. There were multiple iterations of legislation to restore funding starting early in April. One bill restored all of the funding; one bill restored two-thirds; districts had to raise the remainder by taxing; they didn't have to; districts had to use their banked cap; they didn't; it was \$110 million; \$71 million; \$45 million.

Originally, both houses of the legislature were supposed to vote on the funding bill mid-April, but an early April Senate Budget Committee hearing ended with no action on the bill. Furthermore, the April Senate voting session was canceled, leaving the Assembly to vote on a bill on April 15 with no companion bill moving in the Senate. Supposedly, the school funding bill wasn't moving without the OPRA bill also moving.

Ongoing conversations and negotiations about the bill continued, with advocates and legislators unsure of the outcomes, or even if they were reading the most current version of the bill. Ultimately, both houses of the legislature and the governor came to an agreement and the bill passed both houses Monday, along with a bill to change deadlines. Both bills were signed yesterday. **The funding bill will restore 45% of funding to districts that lost funds this year, with districts that have lost funds when compared to 2020-2021 allowed to raise their tax cap levy above 2%, but no more than 9.9%.**

You can read some articles about the ongoing saga from NJ Spotlight (originator of the term "saga,") from [May 7](#) and [May 14](#).

## Community College funding (and take action!)

Operating aid for New Jersey's 18 community colleges has been flat. That actually makes it negative, taking inflation into account. Last year, the legislature added an additional \$20 million in funding which was not included in this year's budget. The Secretary of Higher Education appeared before budget committees last week, with some focus on community college funding. [Read about it](#) and [take action](#) to restore additional funding!

## State Budget

The state budget process is ongoing. The legislature did break "budget break" with their April sessions, but budget break is now officially over, with regular legislative business resuming even as budget hearings wrap up. This week the legislature will be hearing revenue updates from the treasurer.

**The budget must be approved by July 1, or the state shuts down.** Want to know more about how the state budget works? NJ Spotlight did a good piece on [how the state budget is made](#) as part of its "Gotta know NJ" series.

## OPRA

NJEA ultimately took no position on the OPRA (Open Public Records Act) bill. However, many groups and advocates around the state decried the legislature's [gutting of OPRA](#) and the process.

## Schools Development Authority

On April 26, the Joint Committee on the Public Schools heard from the Schools Development Authority about the [costs of fixing aging buildings](#).

## Voucher bill

If it looks like a duck, and quacks like a duck... A bill to create a tax credit program is like vouchers. [Read about it](#) and [take action](#)

## RESULTS FROM MAY 13

- **A2029** - Directs DOE and DOH to develop guidelines for school districts and institutions of higher education concerning **student vaping awareness campaigns**. (Reported out of committee, 2nd reading in Assembly) Support
- **A3413/S2082** - Establishes New Jersey Educator Evaluation Review Task Force; **clarifies collection of student growth data**. (Passed in both houses and sent to Governor) Support
- **A3992** - Increases penalties for certain prohibited sales of tobacco and vapor products. (Reported out of committee with committee amendments, referred to Assembly Commerce Committee) Support

- **A4045/S2930** - Makes various changes to process for access to government records; appropriates \$10 million. (Passed in both houses and sent to Governor) No position
- **A4059/S3002 - Requires Commissioner of Education to permit certain school districts losing State school aid to submit budgets** after enactment of FY 2025 appropriations act. (Passed in both houses and sent to Governor) Support
- **A4161/S3081 - Establishes Stabilized School Budget Aid Grant Program** to restore certain portions of State school aid reductions; permits certain school districts to exceed tax levy growth limitation in 2024-2025 school year; appropriates \$44.7 million. (Passed in both houses and sent to Governor) Support
- **ACR105/SCR98** - Reconstitutes the "Joint Committee on Economic Justice and Equal Employment Opportunity." (Filed with Secretary of State) Support
- **S2531** - Provides police officers may be present at senior residential center or school being used as polling place under certain circumstances; **requires school to establish election day security plan.** (Passed in Senate) Monitor

## RESULTS FROM MAY 9 AND MAY 10

- **A4045/S2930** - Makes various changes to process for access to government records; appropriates \$10 million. (Reported out of committee with committee amendments, 2nd reading in Assembly and Senate) No position
- **A4059/S3002** - Requires Commissioner of Education to permit certain school districts losing State school aid to submit budgets after enactment of FY 2025 appropriations act. (Reported out of committee, 2nd reading in Senate) Support
- **A4161/S3081** - Establishes Stabilized School Budget Aid Grant Program to restore certain portions of State school aid reductions; permits certain school districts to exceed tax levy growth limitation in 2024-2025 school year; appropriates \$44.7 million. (Reported out of committee with committee amendments/substitute, 2nd reading in Senate) Support
- **S1774 - Concerns counseling for children who were either physically present or who may have seen or heard act of domestic violence.** (Reported out of committee with committee amendments, 2nd reading in Senate) Support
- **S1984** - Requires DOH to evaluate hospital compliance with federal hospital price transparency requirements. (Reported out of committee with committee amendments, Referred to Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee) Support
- **S2284** - Establishes Office of Resilience in DCF. (Reported out of committee with committee amendments, Referred to Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee) Monitor

## RESULTS FROM MAY 6

- **A447 - Authorizes establishment of charter school payment reserve account in school districts.** (Reported out of committee with committee amendments, 2nd reading in Assembly) Monitor
- **A1669/S1287 - Removes obstacles to teacher certification for certain teachers.** (Reported out of committee, 2nd reading in Senate) Support
- **A2942 - Alters date by which school districts notify parents of nonpublic school students of eligibility for bus transportation or aid in lieu of payment from August 1 to July 1.** (Reported out of committee, 2nd reading in Assembly) Monitor

- **A3143** - Removing requirement of service during specified dates or in specified locations, thereby broadening eligibility for certain veterans' benefits. (Reported out of committee, referred to Assembly Appropriations Committee) Support
- **A3260 - Directs Department of Agriculture in consultation with DOE, to establish Internet-based school meals application.** (Reported out of committee with committee amendments, referred to Assembly Appropriations Committee) No Position
- **A3873 - Allows certain public high school student athletes to substitute study hall for physical education during their athletic seasons.** (Reported out of committee with committee amendments, 2nd reading in Assembly) Seek Amendments
- **A4059/S3002** - Requires Commissioner of Education to permit certain school districts losing State school aid to submit budgets after enactment of FY 2025 appropriations act. (Reported out of committee, Referred to Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee) Support
- **A4148 - Requires DOE to develop and distribute informational materials on type 1 diabetes.** (Reported out of committee, 2nd reading in Assembly) No Position
- **ACR105/SCR98** - Reconstitutes the "Joint Committee on Economic Justice and Equal Employment Opportunity." (Reported out of committee, 2nd reading in Senate) Support
- **S323 - Requires MVC to conduct unscheduled surprise inspections of certain school buses.** (Reported out of committee, Referred to Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee) Monitor
- **S1060 - Requires public schools to develop policy for emergency administration of nasal seizure rescue medication and use of manual vagus nerve stimulators on students with seizure disorders.** (For discussion only)
- **S1114 - Establishes task force to examine issues and make recommendations concerning youth sports, including abusive coaching, confrontational parents, and bullying of players.** (Reported out of committee, Referred to Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee) Support
- **S2181 - Eliminates requirement for State residency of public school employees for period of three years.** (Reported out of committee, 2nd reading in Senate) Support
- **S2919 - Requires employer to provide certain accommodations to employee who is breast feeding.** (Reported out of committee, Referred to Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee) Support
- **S2945 - Establishes task force to examine school discipline practices including racial disparities and effectiveness.** (Reported out of committee with committee amendments, 2nd reading in Senate) Support
- **S2970 - Lowers age requirement of compulsory school attendance from six to five years old.** (For discussion only)
- **S3000 - Permits certain persons to operate Type S school buses.** Support. (Reported out of committee with committee amendments, 2nd reading in Senate) Support
- **S3156 – Permits boards of education to lease certain school property to federally qualified health centers without bidding.** (Reported out of committee, 2nd reading in Senate) No Position
- **SJR76 - Designates the second Friday of December of each year as "Paraprofessional and School-Related Personnel (PSRPs) in Our Schools Day" in New Jersey to recognize the contributions of paraprofessionals and school-related**

**personnel.** (Reported out of committee with committee amendments, 2nd reading in Senate) Support

**Respectfully Submitted,**

**Donna R. O'Malley**