

**Legislative Report**  
**March 20, 2013**  
**Submitted by Linda Bishop**

PSBA presented testimony this month to the PA House Education Committee during public hearings conducted by the House Education Committee in support of the following bills:

- HB 135, which would recreate the Mandate Waiver Program under Act 16 of 2000, which expired in 2010. PSBA called for expanded mandate relief, especially in the areas of furloughing of employees for economic reasons and prevailing wage.
- HB 618 and HB 759, which address the cyber charter school funding formula. PSBA advocated elimination of the pension double dip and the deduction of unnecessary cyber school costs. PSBA expressed concern about the direct pay language in HB 759, which PSBA does not support.

The PA Senate last week approved SB 470, which would implement a new special education funding formula, establishing how any increases in the current special education appropriation are distributed using weighting factors based on category of student disability. The bill also creates a Special Education Funding Commission to develop the components of the funding formula, including the weighting formula and the parameters of each category of disability. The bill is identical to HB 2 that was passed by the House. This bill will go back to the House for approval, and some version of it looks likely to go to the Governor for signature.

The House approved House Resolution 53, which established a Select Committee to examine the issue of school safety in public and nonpublic schools as well as institutions of higher education. It requires the Select Committee to make recommendations about improving and strengthening school security policies, school safety and security laws, and early detection of potentially violent perpetrators. Recommendations are to be provided to the House by 9/30/13.

The State Board of Education approved extensive changes to its draft revisions of Chapter 4 regulations for academic standards and assessment. The revised regulations will require proficiency on Algebra I, Biology and Literature Keystone Exams as a graduation requirement beginning with the class of 2017. Two additional Keystone Exams, in Composition and Civics, would be required for the class of 2019 and 2020 respectively. The regulations would also change the provision for parental opt-out for religious reasons to require parents to explain their objection and to require those students to take project-based assessments instead.

There are at least 5 other education-related bills under consideration in the Senate and 21 in the House at the present time. Many of the House bills relate to cyber charter funding reform. I will report on these as they progress through the legislative process.

Finally, a new national advocacy organization has been launched in support of public education by renowned education historian, writer, and former Assistant Education Secretary Diane Ravitch. The Network for Public Education has been launched to provide a means for local grassroots groups to connect with each other, particularly in support of pro-public education political candidates. They have started a website at [www.networkforpubliceducation.org](http://www.networkforpubliceducation.org).