



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

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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. **With the Easter Holiday and Congressional Recess, barring any significant developments, *The COSSBA Weekly Education Report* will be on hiatus next week, and will return on Monday, April 17.**

Please use the bookmarks below to navigate to your area of interest:

1. **News, Publications, & Updates on COSSBA Policy Priorities**
  - **Funding**
    - **Sec. Becerra Testifies on HHS FY24 Budget Request in Appropriations Hearing:** On Tuesday, March 28, the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies heard from Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra on the Biden-Harris Administration's fiscal year 2024 (FY24) budget request.
2. **Budget and Appropriations Wrap-up**
  - **Impact on State School Board Associations**
3. **In Brief – Last Week in Washington**
  - **ED Issues Dear Colleague on Ending Corporal Punishment in Schools:** On Friday, March 24, Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona **wrote** to governors, chief state school officers, and school district and school leaders urging them to end corporal punishment in schools—the practice of paddling, spanking, or otherwise imposing physical punishment on students.
  - **House Oversight Committee Examines Impact of Pandemic School Closures:** On Tuesday, March 28, the House Oversight and Accountability Select

Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Pandemic held a hearing to examine school closures related to the pandemic response so that the Committee could conduct further investigations, learn from policy failures, discover and apply best practices and improve readiness for future pandemics.

4. **New Publications**

- **Looking Back to Look Forward: Quantitative and Qualitative Reviews of the Past 20 Years of K-12 Education Assessment and Accountability Policy**

*U.S. Chamber of Commerce (March, 2023)*

This report serves as a comprehensive analysis to date of existing research and qualitative feedback on federal K-12 education policies of the past 20 years from No Child Left Behind (NCLB) to Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

5. **In the News**

- **Designating Schools as Critical Infrastructure Could Help Keep Students Safe**

*The Hill (March 29, 2023)*

- **Garland: School Board Memo Aimed at Violence, Not Parent Protests: 6 Cases Referred to Local Authorities**

*USA Today (March 29, 2023)*

- **Lawmakers Debate who to blame for COVID School Closures: Teachers Unions or Trump?**

*The Hill (March 28, 2023)*

- **Biden's Education Secretary is Done Sitting 'Idly' amid School Fight**

*Politico (March 27, 2023)*

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

- **K-12 Education Funding and Teacher Policy:** The National Conference of State Legislatures will hold an event on state K-12 education spending and teacher policy trends, including compensation increases.

*Wednesday, April 5 at 3pm ET*

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

- **The House and Senate are in recess through Monday, April 17.**

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

9. **About BPAG**

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## 1. COSSBA Policy Priorities

### FUNDING

#### SEC. BECERRA TESTIFIES ON HHS FY24 BUDGET REQUEST IN APPROPS HEARING

On Tuesday, March 28, the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies heard from Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra on the Biden-Harris Administration's Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24) budget request. Subcommittee Chairman Robert Aderholt (R-AL) opened the hearing by saying that as he comes

up to speed as the new Chairman, he has learned more about the “incredible breadth of programs” under this jurisdiction, including “providing childcare and early learning for the youngest Americans.” With that, he commented on the Subcommittee’s responsibility to determine how to support the most critical programs, identify investments that will provide the greatest return, and consider solutions to limited resource challenges that are available. “Unfortunately, hard decisions will have to be made,” Aderholt said. Ranking Member Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) outlined that the requested budget increase would expand affordable early learning programs through more investment in child care, Head Start and preschool development; provide more mental health services to children; strengthen recovery support services and opioid prevention and treatment; and continue the 988 suicide and crisis lifeline. Congresswoman DeLauro criticized GOP-intended budget cuts, claiming that 200,000 children would lose access to Head Start; 100,000 would lose access to childcare; and that the proposed cuts would undermine “early education of our kids and their parents’ ability to get to work.” Secretary Becerra also spoke in depth about the Administration’s proposed investment in childcare and early education, noting that the President’s budget request includes a mandatory proposal to invest \$400 billion over 10 years in high-quality child care and \$200 billion over 10 years in universal preschool. A recording of the hearing can be found here, along with Secretary Becerra’s full testimony.

[Back to top](#)

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## 2. Budget and Appropriations Wrap-Up

After House passage of the Parents Bill of Rights Act (HR 5) two weeks ago, last week’s news in education policy and investments were a bit lower profile.

The results of a survey conducted by the Associated-Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research found that most adults in the US would like to see the federal government shrink, but would also like to see more investments in some popular programs. Of those surveyed, 65% percent think that “too little” is being spent on education. Education is one of only three areas where a majority of both Republicans and Democrats support more spending. (The other areas are infrastructure and Social Security). Advocates will certainly be using the survey results as they try to argue against possible cuts to federal investments in education.

The House Education and the Workforce Committee held two hearings last week. One addressed free speech issues on college campuses; the other was titled, “Unleashing America’s Opportunities for Hiring and Employment.” The latter let observers see where members of the Committee had common ground and differences in policies that support the country’s workers as well as efforts to train and retrain them. Committee Chair Virginia Foxx (R-NC) has said that she would like to develop legislation to reauthorize the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) this summer, and turn to higher education policy later this year. Conversations with staff suggest that Chair Foxx and Ranking Member Bobby Scott (D-VA) could find some common ground in an effort to revise WIOA.

The US Chamber of Commerce Foundation released a report that seeks to create the most comprehensive analysis to date of existing research and qualitative feedback on federal K-12 education policies of the past 20 years from No Child Left Behind (NCLB) to Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The report’s highlights assert that the required use of disaggregated data “shifted the focus from the average kid to every kid”; that student achievement increased due to

NCLB-era assessment and accountability policies; that there is now access to far more reliable, comparable education data than would be available otherwise; and, reforms in teacher evaluation and school turnaround initiatives did not consistently improve student outcomes at scale. The report will give policy wonks and education researchers much to consider.

As for news in the appropriations process, Speaker of the House Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) wrote a letter to President Biden last week asking for another meeting on budget cuts and addressing the country's debt ceiling. McCarthy pressed Biden to "please have your team reach out to mine by the end of this week to set a date for our next meeting," and shared continued opposition to passing a debt ceiling increase without spending cuts. The President's response called for House Republicans to release their counter-proposal to the budget he released weeks ago. Late Thursday, the Speaker said that his party is working on a bill that would address the country's debt limit while cutting domestic spending to pre-pandemic levels, rescind unspent COVID-19 relief funds, impose tougher work requirements on anti-poverty benefits, and ease regulations on energy projects. In the meantime, his caucus is discussing a short-term bill that would avert defaulting on the country's debt until September. In discussing the would-be bill with the press, Speaker McCarthy said that he would like to negotiate with President Biden and is willing to meet "immediately" to do so. The White House repeated its request for a Republican budget in response.

The Congress enters two-week state work period or "recess" and will return back to Washington on April 17.

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

As we have previously reported, House Republicans have stated that they plan to reduce annual government funding for FY 2024 to FY 2022 levels, part of the deal made in order to elect House Speaker Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) in January. In order to achieve this, the most drastic cuts would occur to non-defense spending, which would include programs under the Department of Education's jurisdiction as well as programs (highlighted above) that fall under the Department of Health and Human Services, for example. Historically, federal budget cuts to public education of this degree have often resulted in reduced curriculum offerings, increased class sizes, and faculty layoffs.

It was also highlighted above that Republicans are putting together a bill to address the Nation's debt limit, which would include budget cuts and a provision rescinding any unspent COVID-relief funds. It is possible that this move would have a significant impact on state education agencies and local school districts, as throughout the last year, it was reported that school systems throughout the country had spent less than 15 percent of their ESSER III funds during the 2021-2022 school year. Although the plan is still being finalized, House Republican aides were pointing to government studies showing that there is \$500 billion in unspent funds. Even so, they also noted that a portion of that has been "obligated" to certain funds and will be

difficult to rescind. According to U.S. Comptroller General Gene Dodaro, about \$157 billion of COVID-relief funding is “unobligated.”

[Back to top.](#)

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

#### **ED ISSUES DEAR COLLEAGUE ON ENDING CORPORAL PUNISHMENT IN SCHOOLS**

On Friday, March 24, Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona wrote to governors, chief state school officers, and school district and school leaders urging them to end corporal punishment in schools—the practice of paddling, spanking, or otherwise imposing physical punishment on students. The letter reinforces the Department of Education's (ED) position that corporal punishment in schools should be replaced with evidence-based practices, such as implementing multi-tiered systems of support like Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports that create safe and healthy school environments. “It's unacceptable that corporal punishment remains legally permissible in at least 23 states,” said Cardona. “Despite years of research linking corporal punishment to poorer psychological, behavioral, and academic outcomes, tens of thousands of children and youth are subjected to beating and hitting or other forms of physical harm in school every academic year, with students of color and students with disabilities disproportionately affected,” he continued. In addition to the letter, ED published guidance on how to maintain safe, inclusive, supportive, and fair learning environments. The letter includes specific recommendations for evidence-based practices. According to ED's press release, the letter builds upon ED's position from a similar action in 2016 under the direction of then Secretary John King Jr. and 2014 under the direction of Secretary Arne Duncan in the Obama-Biden Administration.

#### **HOUSE OVERSIGHT CMTE EXAMINES IMPACT OF PANDEMIC SCHOOL CLOSURES**

On Tuesday, March 28, the House Oversight and Accountability Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Pandemic held a hearing titled, “The Consequences of School Closures: Intended and Unintended.” Witnesses included David Zweig, author and investigative journalist, *The Atlantic*, *New York Magazine*, *The Free Press*; Dr. Tracy Beth Hoeg, physical medicine and rehabilitation specialist, epidemiologist, and private practice physician; Virginia Gentles, director of the Education Freedom Center and the Independent Women's Forum; and Donna Mazyck, executive director of the National Association of School Nurses. Chairman Brad Wenstrup's (R-OH) opening statement noted that the intent of Tuesday's hearing was to examine school closures related to the pandemic response so that the Select Subcommittee could “conduct further investigations, learn from policy failures, discover and apply best practices and improve readiness for future pandemics.” While the panel was in agreement that school closures had a shattering effect on youth and it should never happen again, Select Subcommittee Republicans ridiculed the influence of teachers' unions on pandemic-related guidance; and Democrats criticized the rhetoric and policies of the Trump Administration and touted progress that was made with school reopenings since President Joe Biden took office. On the possibility of outside influence on pandemic-related decisions, Chairman Wenstrup stated, “Let's make sure that those involved with policy decisions were not motivated in some way to put themselves above our children and their futures.” Ranking Member Raul Ruiz (D-CA) in his opening statement commented on the Biden Administration's “swift action to develop evidence-based guidance for schools and Congressional Democrats' [efforts to enact] the American Rescue Plan to help kids in schools get back in school safely and responsibly.” Several witnesses testified to evidence that

proved early on that school transmission was low and that school closures did more harm than good. “We gambled with our children,” Dr. Hoeg stated. Meanwhile, Ms. Mazyck underscored how “the coronavirus pandemic and its resulting impact on the health and safety of our nation’s children highlight the need to invest in the public health infrastructure that supports their health and learning.” She called for more Specialized Instructional Support Personnel such as school counselors, school psychologists, and school social workers who prioritize social, emotional, and mental health needs. A recording of the hearing is [here](#), along with witness testimony.

[\*Back to top.\*](#)

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#### **4. New Publications**

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[\*Back to top.\*](#)

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[\*Back to top.\*](#)

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## **THIS WEEK IN WASHINGTON**

### **6. Weekly Calendar**

**Wednesday, April 5, 2023**

**Webinar: Part I: K-12 Education Funding and Teacher Policy**

**Subject:** The National Conference of State Legislatures will hold a webinar on state K-12 education spending and teacher policy trends, including compensation increases.

**Time/Location:** 3:00 PM ET

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

[Back to top.](#)

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## 7. On The Floor of Congress This Week

**The House and Senate are in recess through Monday, April 17.**

[Back to top.](#)

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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](#)

[Back to top.](#)

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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:

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