



THE EARLY CHILDHOOD INVESTMENT CORPORATION

CAPITOL

CORNER

STATE UPDATE

Friday, September 4, 2009

Matt Gillard

mgillard@ecic4kids.org

With the House in session for only one day this week and the Senate off completely, legislative activity was once again light in Lansing. The House did pass a curriculum flexibility bill, HB 4410 sponsored by Representative Sheltroun, which is aimed at providing students alternative ways to meet the Michigan Merit Curriculum standards. The new committee established to consider Speaker Dillon's public employee health care reform plan also held its first hearing this week, with Speaker Dillon himself testifying. This reform idea continues to garner significant attention in Lansing and throughout the state as there are both ardent supporters and opponents.

On the budget front, closed-door negotiations continue between legislative leaders from both the House and the Senate and the Governor's office. The big news this week was the inclusion of four outside mediators in an attempt to kick-start stalled negotiations. Governor Granholm, Speaker Dillon, and Senate Majority Leader Bishop met on Thursday with the four mediators who include, Bill Rustem of Public Sector Consultants, former House Speaker and DTE Vice President Paul Hillegonds, Matt Cullen of Rock Financial and former Michigan Democratic Party Chair Tom LeWand Sr. The discussion apparently was focused on possible reform measures and little, if any, progress was made on actually resolving the pending fiscal year 2010 budget deficit. Senator Bishop and his Republican colleagues have essentially dug in their heels at this point and are demanding that the Governor and House Democrats publicly present their alternative to the Senate's plan which was passed back in June. The Senate plan resolved the 2010 budget deficit primarily through cuts and included over \$1.2 billion in overall cuts to current year spending levels, including drastic cuts to many early childhood programs. The Governor and legislative Democrats have denounced the Senate plan as unacceptable but have yet to publicly present an alternative plan. Negotiations on individual department budgets will not begin in earnest until the Speaker of the House, Senate Majority Leader and Governor agree in broad terms to the level of cuts, amount of stimulus money to be used, and the amount of new revenue to be used in balancing the budget deficit.

221 N. Pine - Lansing, MI 48933

517.371.9000 phone

517.371.9080 fax

www.ecic4kids.org

On Wednesday, a broad-based coalition of organizations calling themselves "Better Michigan Future" presented their ideas on solving Michigan's budget problems by outlining different revenue enhancement possibilities. The group focused on closing tax loopholes, extending the sales tax to luxury services, and implementation of a graduated income tax as preferred methods for raising the revenues needed for the state to continue to provide the services essential to building a better Michigan. This is to date the largest organized effort aimed at promoting increased revenues as a part of the solution to the fiscal year 2010 budget. More information can be found at www.abettermichiganfuture.org.

Also on Wednesday, a group of advocates from Kent County was in Lansing to meet with their local legislators and make the case first-hand for the importance of investing in our youngest citizens. The visit went extremely well and we continue to encourage groups to visit Lansing on session days between now and Oct. 1st. If you are able and willing to organize a group of advocates, regardless of size, from your local community to visit Lansing on a Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday between now and the end of September please contact your Great Start Collaborative to arrange details through the ECIC. It is more imperative than ever for us to continue our advocacy efforts and let our elected officials know that we will not tolerate this budget being balanced on the backs of young children and their families.