

Legislative Director Report: North Cook County/Lake County
Gerri Songer – *December 2020 - January 2021*

Wednesday, December 9, 2020

Attended *Sixth Dems* and *D211 High School Democrats* virtual town hall discussion about the challenges faced in education during COVID-19. Panel included education professionals, mental health professionals, school board members and union officials on the challenges being faced. Sixty-nine participants joined the event.

Panel Members:

Jane Russell - IFT Illinois Secretary/ West Suburban Teachers Union President
Erica Bray-Parker - Wheaton City Council Member/ Glenbard North Teacher
Edward Yung - D211 School Board Member
Nancy Zettler - D300 School Board Member/ Dundee Township Democrats Chair
Russell Anderson - Fremd High School Teacher
Ann Lustig - Lake Zurich High School Counselor

Moderators:

Maya Zimmer - Sixth Dems Fellow
Gabe Seidman - Sixth Dems Fellow/ D211 Democrats Co-Chair

Monday, December 14, 2020

Attended *Merry Music with Morrison* - a virtual fundraiser in support of Senator Julie Morrison featuring holiday music by local performers.

Tuesday, December 15, 2020

Attended Village of *Long Grove Open Board Meeting* and made public comment regarding the South Gateway TIF proposal, highlighting the significant negative impact that TIF districts have on our public schools.

Tuesday, January 7, 2021

Attended *Town Hall on Electoral College Count and Events at the Capitol* with Congressman Brad Schneider. The Congressman provided an update on his experience during the insurrection at the Capitol and Congress's job counting the certified ballots of the Electoral College.

Tuesday, January 7, 2021 and Tuesday, January 12, 2021

Attended *Consensus Meeting for LWVIL Criminal Justice Positions*. Topics included: policing, re-entry, restorative justice, and funding priorities; data collection and transparency; criminal justice coordinating councils, post incarceration, and re-entry; pre-trial procedures, courtroom procedures, and access; investing in communities, bias recognition, gender responsive approach,

restorative justice, and emerging adults; sentencing, funding, and police licensing; and policies, programs, and operations of the Illinois Department of Corrections.

Tuesday, January 12, 2021

Attended *Take Out Tuesday Fundraiser* at Salsa Street Mexican Restaurant in Palatine for Palatine Township slate running in the April 6, 2021 Consolidated Election. Candidates include: Melissa Ortega, Supervisor; Tracy Boland, Clerk; and Matt Flamm, Highway Commissioner. Trustee candidates are: Thakar S. Basati, Megan Gawlik, Deanna Santman, and Nathaniel Groh. Event was hosted by Democrats for Palatine Township.

Tuesday, January 16, 2021

Attended *Lake County Democratic Women - January General Membership Meeting*. LCDW endorsed and introduced 40 women residing in Lake County who will be running in local races for the April 6, 2021 Consolidated Election.

Tuesday, January 12, 2021 and Monday, January 18, 2021

Contacted Jack Lockhart, Chief of Staff for Sen. Ann Gillespie, regarding possible introduction of *Shared Governance amendments* this legislative session. If introduced and passed, amendments would include one teacher on School Boards as a non-voting member to serve in an advisory capacity. The nonvoting teacher would have all other privileges of membership, including the right to make and second motions and to attend executive sessions. Lockhart indicated Sen. Gillespie intends to pursue amendments; however, no movement will occur until legislators return to Springfield in February.

Tuesday, January 19, 2021

Attended *How Did We Get Here: An Interfaith Exploration of the Capitol Attacks & How We Can Heal our Country* hosted by Congressman Sean Casten. Speakers included Dr. Ed Stetzer, Executive Director of the Wheaton College Billy Graham Center; Dr. Michael McKoy, Assistant Professor of Politics and International Relations, Wheaton College; Dr. Amy Peeler, Associate Professor of New Testament, Wheaton College; Associate Rabbi Frederick Kamil, Congregation Etz Chaim, Lombard; Right Reverend Chilton R. Knudsen, D.D. Assisting Bishop for the Diocese of Washington D.C., The Episcopal Church; Imam Hisham Alqaisi, Islamic Foundation, Villa Park

Wednesday, January 20, 2021

Attended *Inauguration Evening Event* featuring Congressmen Schneider and Casten, and Congresswoman Underwood.

Wednesday, January 20, 2021

Attended *Lake County Democratic Women Candidate Training* hosted by Sen. Melinda Bush.

Wednesday, January 20, 2021

Contacted Tommy Brown, Legislative Aid for Congressman Brad Schneider working with the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, about federal legislation for *Hazardous Materials Near Schools*. Brown responded, “Revisiting our bill is on my list in the coming weeks, hope to have more for you come Feb.”

IL Legislative Black Caucus Education Package

HB 2170 passed both chambers of the General Assembly during the Lame Duck session and will now head to the Governor for his signature. Sen. Kimberly A. Lightford brought together education and racial justice advocates to craft a nearly 500-page amendment to advance racial equity in Illinois schools, from birth through college.

2023-24 Graduation Requirements:

1. Four years *language arts*
2. Two years of writing intensive courses (1 must be *English*)
3. Three years of mathematics, one must be *Algebra I*, one must include *geometry* content, and one which may be an *Advanced Placement computer science* course.
4. “Computer science” means the study of computers and algorithms, including their principles, their hardware and software designs, their implementation, and their impact on society. **“Computer science” does not include the study of everyday uses of computers and computer applications, such as keyboarding or accessing the Internet.**
5. Two years laboratory science
6. Two years social studies (one must be history of the United States or a combination of history of the United States and American government and at least one semester must be civics)
Civics course content shall focus on government institutions, the discussion of current and controversial issues, service learning, and simulations of the democratic process.
7. One year chosen from (A) *music*, (B) *art*, (C) *foreign language*, which shall be deemed to include American Sign Language, or (D) *vocational education*.
8. For students entering the 9th grade in the **2022-2023 school year**, one year of a course that includes intensive instruction in *computer literacy*, which may be English, social studies, or any other subject.
9. Beginning with the 2023-2024 school year, every high school student must have the opportunity to take at least one *computer science course* aligned to rigorous learning standards of the State Board of Education.
10. Beginning with the 2028-2029 school year, as a prerequisite to receiving a high school diploma, in addition to other course requirements, students must successfully complete two years of foreign language courses. A third year of foreign language may be chosen to satisfy requirement #6.

**New requirements do not apply to students with disabilities whose course of study is determined by an individualized education program.

Policy changes include:

- *Academic Acceleration* - Automatically enroll students who meet or exceed standards into the next most rigorous course.
- *Equitable Coursework for College Access* - Requires the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) to report college admission coursework recommendations. Students must have access to these recommended courses. Schools can fulfill the requirement to provide it by offering it in house or partnering with a neighboring district, community college, or other course provider. The bill also adds a requirement that the science courses required for graduation be laboratory sciences and adds two years of foreign language to the graduation requirements.
- *Computer Science and Literacy* - Defines computer science and directs ISBE to create computer science standards. Graduation requirements are modified to require one course to include a focus in computer literacy.
- *Evidence-Based Funding* - Professional Review Panel (PRP) will review the adult-to-student ratios specified in the cost factors to determine whether it accurately reflects staffing needed to support students in poverty, changes in cost factors to promote racial equity, the impact of investing \$350 million each year, an overview of alternative funding structures, and potential efficiencies within the system, appropriate funding levels for re-enrolling students who previously dropped out, and evidence-based practices that reduce academic achievement gaps for Black students.
- *Learning Recovery* - P-20 Council will address long-term and short-term learning recovery strategies, including a plan to address the digital divide; evaluate the impact of school closures and remote learning on student outcomes; establish a system for the collection of data; and ensure more time for students' academic, social emotional, and mental health needs.
- *Social-Emotional Health* - Whole Child Task Force is created to establish equitable, inclusive, safe, and supported environment in all schools, taking steps to ensure every child has access to educators and social workers trained in evidence-based interventions and restorative practices. The Freedom Schools fund will provide grants, subject to appropriation, for enriching programs that affirm Black identity. A literacy focus was added to the Freedom Schools section.
- *Diverse Educator Pipeline* - Four components address the shortage of teachers generally and Black teachers specifically:
 - Removes the 3.0 GPA requirement to get into alternative licensure programs.
 - Minority Teacher Initiative scholarship program is amended to increase priority funds for Black males, change the prioritization from first come/first serve to those who received scholarships the previous year and have demonstrated financial need, and create a set-aside for bilingual teachers as the appropriation for the program grows.
 - AIM HIGH is amended to reduce universities' match requirement from 100%, with institutions with more low-income students kicking in 20% and those with fewer low-income students contributing 60%.
 - Transitions in Education Act encourages ISBE, IBE, and ICCB to establish a task force for a Major Panel in Education, which would identify courses that would be accepted upon transfer.

- National Board Certified Teacher program would prioritize in awarding stipends to NBCT Candidate Cohort Trainers who work with rural and diverse candidates.
- *Higher Education Access* - creates a multiple measures approach to placement in credit-bearing college courses. Students who successfully complete a high school transitional course, earn a specific GPA, or meet certain thresholds on placement exams or standardized tests will bypass developmental courses. Institutions must publicly post placement policies, and ICCB and IBHE will consolidate information into reports disaggregated by demographic data and by developmental course model. Equity in Higher Education Act outlines the General Assembly's support for the IBHE strategic plan to close equity gaps, increase post-secondary degree attainment, and improve affordability.
- *Early Childhood* - Expansion of early childhood, increasing compensation for early childhood teachers, and improving the quality and equity of programs.
- *Data Collection to Support Racial Justice* - Requires the Governor's Office and the Department of Innovation and Technology to jointly administer a governance to catalog data supporting major programs, identify similar fields in datasets, improve data quality, collect racial and ethnicity data, develop common process and legal approaches for data sharing, establishing common codes across datasets, and generally catalyzing the process to better interagency data analysis.
- *Inclusive History Curriculum* - Requires ISBE to adopt social science learning standards that are inclusive of all individuals in the country. An Inclusive American History Commission is created to review available resources for use in schools that reflect the diversity of the State, provide guidance on each learning standard on how to ensure instruction and curriculum are not bias to value specific cultures or experiences over others, and provide guidance on professional learning on how to utilize and locate non-dominant cultural narratives and sources. It also amends the Black History study requirement to add the pre-enslavement period and the American civil rights renaissance, and a study of the reasons why Black people came to be enslaved.
- *Workforce Investment Act Administration* - Responsibilities and funding connected to the Workforce Investment Act are transferred from the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity to the Department of Employment Security.