SPONSOR: Sen. Sokola & Rep. Jaques

DELAWARE STATE SENATE
148th GENERAL ASSEMBLY

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 4

ESTABLISHING THE EDUCATION FUNDING IMPROVEMENT COMMISSION TO REVIEW AND MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS TO MODERNIZE AND IMPROVE DELAWARE'S SYSTEM FOR FUNDING PUBLIC EDUCATION.

WHEREAS, Delaware is deeply committed to preparing every child to reach his or her full potential; and

WHEREAS, as the world is transformed by new technology and globalization, students will need to be better educated, better trained, and better prepared to succeed in the new economy; and

WHEREAS, by the year 2025, 65% of Delaware's jobs will require education or training beyond high school, but today only 40% of Delawareans have a post-secondary degree or credential; and

WHEREAS, the General Assembly has embraced the Delaware Promise, committing that by 2025 the State will have as many Delawareans with post-secondary education as jobs that require it by 2025; and

WHEREAS, to fulfill the Delaware Promise, the General Assembly has invested substantially in expanding and improving educational opportunities for Delaware's children, most importantly those in poverty and with special needs; and

WHEREAS, the State will not be able to fulfill this promise and build a world-class education system for Delaware's children without modernizing the education funding system; and

WHEREAS, the current education funding system was developed 3/4 of a century ago and does not reflect the needs of today's children, teachers, schools, and districts; and

WHEREAS, Delaware is 1 of only 4 states in the nation that does not provide additional funding for English language learners, and 1 of only 15 states that does not provide additional funding for students in poverty; and

WHEREAS, a modernized education funding system would allow for more flexibility, transparency, and innovation to better serve Delaware's children, and would allow the State to target resources to students in poverty, students with disabilities, English language learners, and other high-needs children; and

WHEREAS, stakeholders from across the education system should come together to conduct a comprehensive review of the current system and recommend improvements to better serve all Delaware students;

NOW, THEREFORE:

BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate and the House of Representatives of the 148th General Assembly of the State of Delaware, with the approval of the Governor, that the Education Funding Improvement Commission ("Commission") is hereby established to conduct a comprehensive review of Delaware's public education funding system and make recommendations to modernize and strengthen the system.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Commission shall consider national and international best practices in public education funding, in addition to reports and recommendations previously issued regarding Delaware's education funding system, and shall make recommendations regarding the following:

(1) Transitioning to a student-focused funding system and weighting funding based on demographic characteristics of students.

(2) Introducing more flexibility for the state, districts, and schools to raise and spend resources more effectively for their students.

(3) Improving the way revenues are collected and allocated for education throughout the State.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that, in pursuing the above objectives, the Commission may also consider the following topics:

(1) The amount of funding necessary to prepare a student to be successful.

(2) More effective uses of current funding sources.

(3) Those groups of students that would benefit the most from receiving additional funding, such as low-income students, high-need students, rural students, and English language learners, and the amount of resources or nature of support that those groups would need to be successful.

(4) Adequacy of resources available for students with special needs.

(5) Whether additional resources are needed to better serve students who are homeless, have behavior challenges, or are adjudicated delinquent.

(6) Whether, and how, different types of funding should be allocated, including operational funds, capital funds, and grants.

(6) Ways to provide more flexibility for schools and districts to use funding to best serve student needs.

(7) Current and future system resource constraints and demographic trends.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Commission shall be comprised of the following members or a designee appointed by the member serving by virtue of position:

(1) A Chair, appointed by the Governor.

(2) Two members of the Senate, appointed by the President *Pro Tempore* of the Senate, 1 from each caucus.

(3) Two members of the House of Representatives, appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, 1 from each caucus.

(4) The Controller General.

(5) The Secretary of Education.

(6) The Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

(7) The President of the Delaware State Board of Education.

(8) The Governor's Education Policy Advisor.

(9) The President of the Delaware State Education Association.

(10) One parent, appointed by the Delaware Parent Teacher Association.

(11) One superintendent, appointed by the President of the Chief School Officers Association.

(12) One superintendent from a Vocational Technical District, appointed by the President of the Chief School Officers Association.

(13) One traditional public school administrator employed at a school with a high population of at-risk students, appointed by the Delaware Association of School Administrators.

(14) One charter school leader employed at a school with a high population of at-risk students, appointed by the Delaware Charter Schools Network.

(15) One local school board member, appointed by the Delaware School Board Association.

(16) Council Chair of the Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens.

(17) One business representative, appointed by the Governor.

(18) One member of a community organization serving students in poverty, appointed by the Governor.

(19) One member of a community organization serving students learning English.

(20) Three community members with special knowledge of education finance or special ability to contribute to the discussion, appointed by the Governor.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that recommendations shall be adopted by a majority vote of the members of the Commission.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Commission shall report its findings and recommendations to the President *Pro Tempore* of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Governor, and, for public distribution, the Director of the Division of Research of Legislative Council and the Director of the Delaware Public Archives by March 31, 2016.

SYNOPSIS

While Delaware is deeply committed to preparing every child to reach his or her full potential and succeed in the new economy, the State will not be able to build a world-class education system for its children without modernizing the 70-year-old education funding system. This Joint Resolution establishes the Education Funding Improvement Commission to conduct a comprehensive review of Delaware's public education funding system and make recommendations to modernize and strengthen the system. The Commission will include stakeholders from across the education system and will submit a report and recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly no later than March 31, 2016.

Author: Senator Sokola