



Federal News & Information – May 9, 2022

BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS

The House was in recess last week, while the Senate was in session. When the House returns this week, the Appropriations Committee will once again be busy. The panel will hold a total of 19 hearings on FY 2023 spending at various agencies, including one on the National Science Foundation (NSF) and another on the Labor Department's spending plans. The NSF hearing will be the first since the creation of the new directorate for Technology, Innovation and Partnerships, and there are likely to be many questions about it and its programs.

During the week before last, the four leaders of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees met to start discussing a discretionary total and presumably a split between defense and nondefense funding for FY 2023. Participants reported that the meeting was productive, although it will be at least a few weeks before any allocations are decided. In addition, Senate Budget Committee Chair Bernie Sanders (I-VT) noted that it was not likely that his committee would produce a budget resolution for FY 2023. That all but confirms that appropriators will be deciding the allocations this year. At a Senate Appropriations Committee hearing last week on the president's defense budget, several members expressed concern that the president's 4% increase for defense was not sufficient, making it likely that a FY 2023 discretionary total will have more defense funding and therefore likely less nondefense funding than the president requested. That has education advocates bracing for a challenging cycle.

While the debate and passage of the Labor, Health and Human Services and Education spending bill is always complicated by attempts to attach various policy riders, increased intensity around women's reproductive rights is expected due to the leak of a would-be decision on the matter from the Supreme Court. Abortion often comes up as the spending bill is debated and the Supreme Court's decision will make that debate even louder during an election year.

When the House returns this week, both chambers are expected to resume negotiations concerning a \$33 billion package for Ukraine. Both parties want to get that aid approved as soon as possible, although there will likely be some difficult debate of what else might be attached to the measure. Some would like to see a COVID funding bill linked to the measure; others want to keep the two items separated.

MENTAL HEALTH CAUCUS EXAMINES SCHOOL-BASED MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

On Tuesday, May 3, the Congressional Mental Health Caucus, chaired by Representatives Grace Napolitano (D-CA) and John Katko (R-NY), held a legislative briefing on the benefits of school-based mental health services. Participants included Congresswoman Napolitano; Caren Howard, director of policy and advocacy at Mental Health America; Art McCoy, board member of Mental Health America; Dwayne Williams, a licensed school psychologist; and youth advocates. Howard began the briefing by pointing to national data showing the substantial increase in instances of mental health crises. March

2022 data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reveal a decline in the overall mental health of teens during the pandemic, Howard stated. Specifically, the percentage of teens reporting feelings of sadness and hopelessness rose to 44.2% from 36.7% in 2019. The panel highlighted several ways student mental health and on-site intervention can be supported in schools and help close mental healthcare gaps. These include on-site safe spaces for students and teachers; school-based health clinics; social and emotional learning (SEL); group and individual behavioral therapy; and mental mindfulness practice throughout the day. Williams added that schools should prioritize programs and trauma supports that benefit all students – “programs that are most effective integrate all cultures, values, and lived experiences,” he said. Congresswoman Napolitano pointed to the caucus’ legislative efforts, particularly the introduction of the Mental Health Services for Students Act of 2021 (H.R. 721) and the newly launched bipartisan 9-8-8 & Crisis Services Task Force. H.R. 721 would provide funding to support on-site school-based mental health services, while the taskforce will ensure effective implementation of the 9-8-8 National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. Learn more about the Congressional Mental Health Caucus [here](#).

EQUITY SOLUTIONS THROUGH SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

On Tuesday, May 3, All4Ed hosted a webinar titled, “Promoting Educational Equity: Solutions through Social and Emotional Well-Being.” Participants included Phillip Lovell, associate executive director of All4Ed; Alejandro Diasgranados, elementary teacher at District of Columbia Public Schools; Sharon Fishel, education specialist at the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development; Michael Lamb, deputy chief of learning and development sciences at District of Columbia Public Schools; Ayna Sibtain, student at Metro Nashville Public Schools; and Seth Thorpe, student at Metro Nashville Public Schools. Conversation focused on how schools are bringing students’ social and emotional well-being — and its connection to their education experiences — to the forefront of their practices and plans to ensure educational equity. The panel underscored the significance of educating students with a community-based and cultural lens and creating an environment where students can openly share where they are struggling or require additional support. The panel also noted that teachers should feel valued and empowered as educators, and that they too have emotional and social needs to be met. The webinar complemented a series of briefs written by the Multicultural and Diversity Research Center (MDRC). Learn more [here](#).