



PARSS Legislative Update July 10, 2023

The Budget Moves Forward...But Not Across the Finish Line

The summer budget deliberations can bring an inside the beltway sense of political intrigue and drama to Harrisburg. Count this year as no different.

A quick recap: The House passed a budget in early June upping the ante on the Governor’s numbers from the proposal he presented in early March, despite protests from the House GOP. In the Senate, the GOP majority moves an amended version of [House Bill 611](#) which they say had the Governor’s support. The Governor with a “not so fast” response, says there was no final agreement reached in the negotiations.

The Senate version of the state budget looks like this for major education programs:

(All dollars in 000's)	Current Yr.	Gov	Senate Budget	Change from Current %	Change from Current \$
Basic Ed Funding (BEF)	7,305,079	8,421,751	7,872,444	7.8%	567,365
Retirement	2,986,000	2,971,000	2,995,000	0.3%	9,000
Special Ed Funding (SEF)	1,336,815	1,440,641	1,386,815	3.7%	50,000
Pupil Transportation	602,746	593,100	593,100	-1.6%	(9,646)
Level Up Supplement	225,000	-	100,000	-55.6%	(125,000)
Career and Tech	105,138	119,138	119,138	13.3%	14,000
PASS Scholarship Program	-	-	100,000		100,000
School Food Services	46,000	91,536	92,500	101.1%	46,500
Teacher Recruitment	-	-	10,000		10,000

Note: Some formula driven programs show reductions e.g., transportation and retirement which is a result of the formula elements. It is not a cut in the formula, rather a reduction in the amount of funding driven out by the formula.

To see all education line items see the [Department of Education section of this document](#).

The eight-hundred-pound gorilla in the Senate budget was the inclusion of a new \$100 million school voucher program, dubbed the PA PASS program. The House response was not unexpected— a vehement “no” to any voucher funding, leaving the budget between the proverbial rock and a hard place.

In the next development, the Governor tells House Democrats to resolve the budget impasse by agreeing to the Senate amended budget with the proviso that he will line item veto the voucher funding.

So, the House gives its approval to the Senate plan by a vote of 117-86 on July 5. Fifteen Republicans in the House joined House Democrats in approving the budget bill avoiding an impasse. Not so fast again.

Bills passed in the General Assembly are required to be signed by the presiding officer in both chambers. While the House signed off, the Senate is in adjournment until September and when they may schedule a day to let the presiding officer, the lieutenant governor, sign HB 611 unknown. Consequently, we now have a procedural impasse. Until the Senate returns, House Bill 611 dangles in the Harrisburg political winds. Adding to the budget dilemma is the holdup of related budget bills including the non-preferred appropriations, requiring a two-thirds vote, for Penn State, Pitt, and Temple. How long can the impasse last. Hard to tell. Someone has to blink.