



PARSS Legislative Update ***June 30, 2023***

Budget Discussions Continue but Vouchers Create Complexity

The State Senate on Thursday passed a voucher bill by amending an unrelated House passed Fiscal Code Bill. [House Bill 479](#) passed the Senate by a vote of 29-21 with Senator Anthony Williams (D-Philadelphia) voting with Senate Republicans in support of the bill. The bill would create the Pennsylvania Award for Student Success Program within the State Treasury to provide scholarships to help students pay tuition, school-related fees, and special education services fees to attend a nonpublic school beginning in the 2024-2025 school year. To be eligible, a student's household income would have to be 250% below the federal poverty level. The vouchers would be available to students in the lowest 15% of schools ranked by state assessment scores. More [details on the bill can be found here](#).

The voucher issue is adding a hurdle in the budget negotiations as House Democratic leadership have indicated they will not consider the bill. However, with the Governor's backing, the triangulation in the budget discussions puts the issue squarely on the table to be part of the final agreement.

The Governor will try to thread the needle in leading both parties to a final budget agreement this weekend. He set the expectations with this statement yesterday: "After a dozen years of total Republican control of the Legislature, Senate Republicans need to give more than they're used to – and after a dozen years in the minority, House Democrats can't expect to get everything they've wanted over the last decade in one budget."

We will keep you updated as budget developments occur.