

Overview

Since its creation in August 2015, the Wilmington Education Improvement Commission (the Commission) has made progress in the critically important work of improving educational outcomes for students in the City of Wilmington. Last year, the Commission's focus was on strengthening educational accountability by redrawing school district boundaries in the City of Wilmington. The Commission's Redistricting Plan was approved by the State Board of Education (SBE) before being considered by the legislature. The General Assembly supported the SBE's decision to approve the Redistricting Plan, but required the Commission to return to the legislature for final approval. In the next legislative session, the Commission will seek final approval of the Redistricting Plan. Additionally, the Commission will continue to focus on changing the state's funding formula to better meet the needs of students from low-income families, English Language learners, and basic special education students. The Commission will also focus on establishing a model for collaboration between charters and districts, and work across sectors to better meet the needs of Wilmington students and low-income students statewide.

Legislative Actions Taken

Redistricting Plan

On March 17, 2016, SBE approved the Commission's Redistricting Plan by which, effective July 1, 2018, the Red Clay Consolidated School District would assume responsibility for the Wilmington students and schools now served by the Christina School District.

House Joint Resolution 12

HJR 12 was introduced on May 5, 2016, which supported the proposed changes to school district boundaries in New Castle County. It also recognized that the plan presented by the Commission and approved by the State Board of Education would require necessary and sufficient funding to achieve the goals laid out in the plan for redistricting and improving student outcomes. The resolution passed in the State House of Representatives, but was defeated in the State Senate on June 30, 2016.

House Bill 424

HB 424 was introduced on June 14, 2016, which authorized the State Board to proceed with the redistricting, but did not constitute approval of any particular revenue or spending measure proposed in the Commission's plan. The bill passed the State House of Representatives, but was defeated in the State Senate on June 30, 2016.

Senate Joint Resolution 17

The State Senate introduced Senate Joint Resolution 17, on June 29, 2016, which affirmed the decision of the State Board of Education to approve the Commission's Plan ("the Plan") for redistricting and supports the continued work of the Commission in developing details of implementation of the Plan. It also recognized that the Plan would require necessary and sufficient funding to achieve the goals laid out in the Plan for redistricting and improving student outcomes. The resolution passed the General Assembly on the morning July 1, 2016.

Senate Bill 300

The State Senate introduced Senate Bill 300, which clarified that a vote by the General Assembly confirmed

support for the State Board's approval of redistricting, but required the Commission to return to the legislature for final approval. It also clarified that the action by the General Assembly did not constitute approval of any particular revenue or spending measure proposed in the Commission's Plan. This bill also provided a \$200,000 supplemental appropriation to establish the Wilmington Redistricting Transition Fund, which can be used by the Commission to assess the fiscal impact of transitioning City of Wilmington students from the Christina School District to the Red Clay Consolidated School District. This bill passed through the General Assembly with amendments on the morning of July 1, 2016.

What Does this Mean?

- The passage of SJR 17 and SB 300 (with HA 1) requires that the Commission conduct additional analysis to determine the fiscal impact of executing the proposed redistricting plan in the affected districts. WEIC's goal is to present the results of this analysis during the next legislative session as part of its plan.
- Based on the failure of the General Assembly to approve the required funding and other approvals for implementation, at its meeting of July 26, the Commission voted to suspend the timeline for implementation until Fall 2019.
- The Wilmington Education Improvement Commission will continue its work in advocating for education policy change in the state. The Commission should continue the work already underway through its various committees to assess, and set plans in motion to address, the various needs of the communities in the city of Wilmington.

Legislative Action Required

- An additional funding unit for low-income students, English language learners, and basic special education grades K-3 must be approved, and **the funding unit should be rolled-out statewide as soon as possible.**
- Confirmation of the required non-recurrent transition funding proposed by Governor Markell.
- Joint-Resolution from the General Assembly giving final confirmation of the redistricting plan approved by the State Board of Education.

Why is this Important?

- Funding for low-income students, English language learners (ELL), and basic special education grades K-3 would address the unmet needs for students statewide.
- The proposed actions are supported by a broad coalition that includes the leadership of all four school districts in New Castle County, and a broad coalition of business and community leaders.
- Community institutions have pledged direct support, such as United Way and the University of Delaware.

What are the Safeguards?

- No Red Clay or Christina taxpayer should bear any undue tax burden because of redistricting. The needed funding must be addressed predominantly as a state obligation.
- If the necessary and sufficient resources are not confirmed by WEIC by July 2018, the Plan will expire