



Fund School Worker Unemployment Insurance

SF32, HF2497, SF2684

We are reaching out with a concern that will greatly impact Hopkins Public Schools District – the unfunded costs to extend unemployment insurance to hourly school employees.

The House and Senate education finance bills propose to make hourly or unlicensed school workers eligible for unemployment compensation in the summer months. The legislature does not provide state aid or allow school districts to use the unemployment levy to cover these additional costs. Their failure to provide funding creates another cross-subsidy as school districts will be forced to use general fund dollars to cover these new costs.

These bills also have implications for district summer school program staffing. There are some specifics we are still seeking clarity on, specifically what is considered “similar” or “suitable” employment. Districts report difficulty in filling summer learning program positions, which include paraprofessionals, transportation personnel, and sometimes food service employees. If districts are unable to hire sufficient summer school employees, these valuable educational services in the summer can’t be offered. In the long run this hurts our students. This may have the greatest impact on special education, but there are many other programs that offer summer programs such as targeted services, career and technical education, community education, and early childhood family education.

We are asking for state funding, outside of the education budget, for this state initiative. If there is no state funding, this proposal will take 2% off the proposed formula increase the first year and beyond. This unfunded mandate will force districts to cover unemployment costs for those who don’t work during summer months and will take away from other district priorities like staff increases and student and classroom needs.

Thank you for your public service. Please do not hesitate to reach out to discuss these concerns in more detail.

Respectfully,

Dr. Rhoda Mhiripiri-Reed, Superintendent, Hopkins Public Schools
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Hopkins Public Schools Legislative Action Coalition