April 13, 2020

Legislative UPDATE
Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education

One or both chambers of Pennsylvania's Legislature is potentially set to return this week to act on COVID-19 legislation.

Before lawmakers recessed for the Easter/Passover holiday, a report released last Wednesday by the state's Independent Fiscal Office estimates that the "coronavirus outbreak could cost Pennsylvania $2.7 billion in lost tax revenue over the next 15 months, blowing a serious hole in the state budget," Spotlight PA reports.

What could this mean for Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education? "Higher education institutions will emerge stronger from this experience if they take this crisis as an opportunity to rethink their academic and business models," Chancellor Greenstein writes. "We have an opportunity to reshape our future."

That said, the System's initial analysis indicates the financial impact is significantly greater than anything in the System's history.

Pennsylvania's Legislature must act to stabilize public higher education. Without state relief, System universities' efforts to provide student access with high-quality, affordable college opportunities will be
significantly impeded.

The Office of the Chancellor and System leadership remain committed to working in coordination with state lawmakers to ensure our institutions have the resources necessary to help students succeed and support the national and state recovery.

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**Senate**

**Session & Committee Activity**

The chamber has been in recess to the call of the pro tempore since Wednesday, April 7th. At this time, the Senate's return date is flexible depending possibly on the House's further action on these bills:

- **SB 613 (Mensch)**: An Act amending the Administrative Code, reenacting provisions related to criminal history background checks of employees and contractors with access to Federal tax information and adding a new article regarding emergency COVID-19 provisions for a mitigation plan for businesses.

- **SB 841 (Martin)**: An Act amending Titles 35 (Health and Safety) and 42 (Judiciary and Judicial Procedure) of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, reauthorizing the Pennsylvania Health Care Cost Containment Council; allowing local governments to provide greater flexibility on property tax deadlines; permitting local governments to conduct remote meetings; and giving notaries emergency authorization to notarize documents remotely through the use of communications technology. Read more...

The vote on concurring in amendments by the House to **SB 327** (Argall) is also pending. The legislation, which amends the Administrative Code, requiring the Department of General Services to conduct an annual survey of state facility usage, was amended by the House on April 7th to address debt cost reduction, as well as the closure of businesses and creation of a COVID-19 Cost and Recovery Task Force.

In budget-related activity, the Senate Appropriations Committee moved bills that provide a "platform vehicle for the advancement of general appropriations for the fiscal year of 2020-2021," Majority Chairman Browne said. It is expected these bills will be returned to committee for further refinement. Bills of interest include:

- **SB 1050** (Browne): An Act to provide from the General Fund for the expenses of the Executive, Legislative and Judicial Departments, the public debt and the public schools, including the State
System of Higher Education, for the fiscal year July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021.

- **SB 1060** (Browne): A supplement to the act to accept grant of Public Lands, by the US, to several states, for endowment of Agricultural Colleges, making appropriations for carrying the same into effect; and providing for basis for payments of appropriation.

- **SB 1061** (Browne): A supplement to the University of Pittsburgh - Commonwealth Act making appropriations for carrying the same into effect; and providing for a basis for payments, for method of accounting and for certain fiscal information disclosure.

- **SB 1062** (Browne): A supplement to the Temple University - Commonwealth Act making an appropriation for carrying the same into effect; providing for a basis for payments; for method of accounting and for certain fiscal information disclosure.

- **SB 1063** (Browne): A supplement to the Lincoln University - Commonwealth Act making an appropriation for carrying the same into effect; providing for a basis for payments, for method of accounting and for certain fiscal information disclosure.

- **SB 1093** (Browne): An Act providing for the capital budget for the fiscal year 2020-2021.

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**House of Representatives**

**Session & Committee Activity**

[House Session Days](#) | [Watch Session Live](#) | [House Calendars](#) | [House Committee Meeting Schedule](#)

The House is expected to gavel in Tuesday. Non-voting session will occur today, with the House State Government Committee expected to meet later today to consider **HB 2388** (Mihalek), requiring the secretary of the Department of Community and Economic Development to issue a waiver to the governor's order to allow all car dealerships to open.

In addition to SBs 613 (Mensch) and 841 (Martin), imminent House floor activity could include consideration of this Coronavirus-related bill:

- **HB 2400** (Turzai): An Act amending the Administrative Code, allowing all public and private construction activities to be undertaken that adhere to mitigation measures set forth by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to protect workers and mitigate the spread of the COVID-19 virus. [Read more...](#)
Bill Tracking Report

The following information is updated during legislative session weeks.

In the House:

HCO3436 (Ullman): Guaranteeing admission into the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education with junior standing to community college students who complete an approved Associate Degree for Transfer program. Last Action: 4-7-20 H Filed

HCO3418 (Keefer): Amends the Administrative Code to require the governor in the case of a disaster emergency to use the most current Essential Critical Infrastructure Workforce advisory list in determining if the business is life-sustaining. Last Action: 04-02-20 H Filed

This update is provided as a courtesy of the Office of the Chancellor as a preview of upcoming legislative activity and a review of action on legislative issues of interest to the State System. The Legislative UPDATE is distributed during legislative session weeks.

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and does not necessarily express the views of Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, or its agents.