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**SSB1065** was introduced to the Senate Education Committee on January 20, 2021. This is an extremely complex piece of legislation – more than 50 pages in length - and it will experience a passel of revisions before funnel week. We thought it was important for you to understand the initial scope of this legislation, and we want to encourage you to become involved in the process and to contact your representative/senator. Our desire is for you to be *knowledgeable* and *well-prepared* when communicating with your [legislator](#).

**SSB1065** contains **8 divisions**, and we have done our best to summarize each of those divisions, *as they currently exist*. Again, we are hopeful our work informs you, and allows you to listen and to advocate from a position of understanding.

As always, please never hesitate to [contact](#) us. We value your feedback!

### **Division I – Student First Scholarship**

This Division provides students the opportunity to receive a scholarship to transfer to a nonpublic school, if their attendance center has been identified for comprehensive support and improvement under ESSA. Eligible students include those entering kindergarten for the first time, current K-12 students, and students who received a scholarship for the preceding school year. Parents or guardians of students eligible must apply annually to the Iowa Department of Education. Unused funds are carried forward, and at the end of their K-12 experience, any funds remaining in a student's account can be used for higher education expenses.

### **Division II – Charter School Programs**

This Division establishes a new charter school program. In general, charter schools are public schools that are governed and operated with a greater degree of autonomy with less public control than traditional schools. Under current Iowa law, schools obtain charters only with the approval and oversight of a local school district. This Division creates the opportunity for a public/private entity to establish a charter school *that operates independently from a public school district*. The bill establishes provisions governing the approval, denial, and oversight of charter school applications and their implementation.

### **Division III – Voluntary Diversity Plans**

This Division would prohibit using voluntary diversity plans as the basis to deny the open enrollment of a student to another district. A "voluntary diversity plan" is a plan that is adopted by a local school board to promote diversity and to avoid minority student overrepresentation or underrepresentation. Five districts in Iowa have a board-adopted plan that specifies the percentage of students eligible to enroll in/out of the district. Under current law, a district operating under a voluntary diversity plan may deny an application for open enrollment that would adversely impact their diversity plan.

### **Division IV – Statewide SIS & Flexible School Support Programming**

This Division calls for the establishment of a single, comprehensive, statewide, student information system. All schools, public and private, along with the AEA's will be required to use the system. The system will be designed to improve school-to-school and district-to-district information exchanges, while maintaining the confidentiality of individual student and staff data. The Department of Education will cover the costs of the system for the first year. After that, the Department of Education will collect a per pupil fee from all schools and AEA's. For the first year, the fee charged cannot exceed \$7/student.

**Also included** in Division IV is a requirement calling for the State Board of Education to establish a Flexible Student and School Support Program. Under the program, the Director may, for a period not to exceed 3 years, grant the applicant (public or non-public school) the ability to use the program to implement evidence-based practices in innovative ways to enhance student learning, well-being and postsecondary success.

Schools approved will be exempt from one or more requirements of the educational program specified in the bill or the minimum school calendar requirements in section 279.10.

### **Division V – Education Tax Credits and Deductions**

This Division allows eligible educators to deduct certain classroom expenses not to exceed \$500.00. Additionally, there is a proposed increase in tuition and textbook tax credits for each dependent receiving private instruction or in attendance at an accredited private school. The maximum tax credit would equal \$1,000 per qualifying student.

### **Division VI – Student Enrollment**

This Division addresses the methodology for determining student enrollment. Historically, regular student enrollment is established in October. The proposed change to the law would require administrators to "average" the **October** enrollment figure with an enrollment figure taken in **April** of the same school year. A similar methodology would apply to supplementary weighting calculations for special education students.

### **Division VII – Open Enrollment**

This Division addresses Open Enrollment procedures and processes. The application deadline is still **March 1**; however, a second deadline has been added for applications that are filed for "Good Cause." That deadline is **April 15**. The "Good Cause" definition has been expanded to include "attendance centers identified as *in significant need for improvement*", and further language has been added to define "significant need for improvement."

Pupil transportation costs for open enrollment students has been further clarified along with a change in transportation costs. The change is based on the formula for those that qualify under the Economic eligibility category.

Finally, this Division proposes open enrollment students should be allowed to participate immediately in interscholastic athletic contests. Any waiting period will be eliminated.

### **Division VIII - School Corporation**

Iowa Chapter 279.1 currently defines the school board's organizational first meeting. This division amends Code 279.1 to specifically include "a school corporation is entrusted with public funds for the purpose of improving student outcomes, including but not limited to student academic achievement and skill proficiency and the board of directors of the school corporation is responsible for overseeing such improvement."