



SREB

Legislative Report

Final legislative and budget actions

Alabama (<http://alisondb.legislature.state.al.us/alison/default.aspx>)

After indefinitely suspending the regular 2020 legislative session in late March, legislators returned in early May with an agreement to consider only budget bills for 2020-21 and local bills during the remaining, shortened session. Within a week of returning, legislators had approved an Education Trust Fund budget, which supports educational and other programs in the state, as well as a State General Fund budget, which supports non-education government functions. The nearly \$2.4 billion for the latter budget is a 7% increase over the 2019-20 amount.

The Education Trust Fund budget for 2020-21 totals \$7.2 billion, up 1.3%. However, this is a much smaller increase than had been anticipated prior to the onset of the COVID-19 crisis, precluding both large funding increases for programs and a previously proposed teacher salary increase. K-12 funding rises 1.5% to \$4.9 billion, including \$4.4 billion to local boards of education, up 0.4%.

While funding for the state department of education is up 19.8% to \$301.6 million, \$18.6 million of the increase is new funding to implement the Alabama Literacy Act approved by the legislature in 2019, and \$9.7 million in new funding implements the high needs special education grant program. A further \$5.6 million in new funding is provided for the statewide school safety, security and climate program. The English language learners program receives \$14.2 million, up 92.4%, the Alabama teacher mentor program receives \$4 million, up 33.3%, and funding for the Computer Science For Alabama program doubles to \$2 million.

State colleges and universities receive \$1.2 billion, a 3.1% increase, while the community colleges system receives \$428.1 million, up 2.7%. Student financial aid programs through the Alabama Commission on Higher Education receive \$19.6 million, a 9.8% increase.

Legislators also approved supplemental appropriations for the 2019-20 fiscal year (unlike most other states, Alabama's fiscal year begins on October 1). House Bill 190 appropriates \$65.6 million to institutions of higher education, including \$23.3 million for the community college system, as well as \$177 million for K-12 education, including \$2 million for teacher professional development. House Bill 189 appropriates \$14.1 million to the state department of education, which includes \$9.8 million in reading training for educators to support implementation of the Alabama Literacy Act, \$2.7 million for regional math coaches to improve early mathematics instruction, and \$1 million for a marketing campaign for teachers.

On the final day of the regular legislative session, legislators approved Senate Bill 161 to allocate funding under the federal CARES Act to provide COVID-19 relief funding. Included in the allocations is up to \$300 million for technology and infrastructure costs for remote learning.

Arkansas (<https://www.arkleg.state.ar.us/>)

Legislators met in April — under extraordinary social-distancing precautions — for the fiscal session that takes place in even-numbered years. This followed a three-day special session in March held specifically in response to the COVID pandemic. The outcome of the special session was creation of a COVID-19 Rainy Day Fund to offset revenue reductions and meet unanticipated needs due to the crisis.

While the maximum total allocation of state funds for 2020-21 under the Revenue Stabilization Act, as approved by legislators, would total \$5.9 billion, up 2.6% from the prior year, that amount is \$212.2 million above current revenue projections. The full allocation may only be released at the discretion of the governor if revenue receipts improve over current projections. The amounts in this summary reflect the maximum possible allocations.

The maximum amount of K-12 funding to school districts is just under \$2.2 billion, up 0.4%, while career education would remain level-funded at just under \$32 million. The Division of Elementary and Secondary Education would receive \$16.3 million, up 0.3%, while funding for the Academic Facilities Partnership Program would remain level at \$41.8 million. Funding for the state's two technical institutes would total \$5.5 million, up 0.3%.

Public four-year universities would receive \$604.7 million, up 0.9%, while two-year colleges would receive \$117.7 million, up 0.4%. The maximum allocation of \$32.7 million for technical colleges would be a 1.5% decline.

Georgia (<https://legislature.ky.gov/>)

Prior to suspending the 2020 regular session in March, legislators approved two pieces of legislation — House Bill 444, the Dual Enrollment Act, and House Bill 792, the amended 2019-20 budget.

Overall, available general funds for the 2019-20 fiscal year were projected to have declined 1.6% to \$23.3 billion. Many of the reductions in the budget were accomplished by eliminating unfilled employment positions across agencies.

While general funds for K-12 under the amended budget are up 1.2% over the original amount, to nearly \$10.8 billion, the amended total utilizes \$255.7 million in revenue shortfall reserve funds. A large portion of the increased funding, \$104.2 million, is provided to reflect an upward mid-

school-year adjustment in statewide enrollment. General funds to the University System of Georgia and to the Technical College System of Georgia both decline 0.6% below the original appropriation to \$2.6 billion and \$371.7 million, respectively. General funds to the Georgia Student Finance Commission are down 2% while allocated lottery proceeds decline 1.8% to \$853.7 million; the latter reduction reflects reductions in projected financial aid program needs.

Legislators in Georgia, in early March, completed action on House Bill 444, the Dual Enrollment Act, and the governor signed it into law in late April. The act, which was originally filed in early 2019, establishes the purposes of dual enrollment in the state as improving high school students' access to postsecondary educational opportunities, increasing high school graduation rates and decreasing the time and cost for students to obtain postsecondary degrees or credentials. The act restricts courses that are eligible for dual enrollment funding to secondary core courses or career, technical and agricultural education courses that are aligned to the state department of education's career clusters and pathways program. The legislation establishes a cap of 30 semester hours for which each student may receive program funding. In addition, students in grade 10 may only receive funding for CTAE dual enrollment courses, and only if they obtain an ACT or SAT score that would meet the requirements to receive a Zell Miller Scholarship; students in grade nine are no longer eligible to receive dual enrollment funding.

Legislators are expected to resume their regular legislative session in June, and appropriations for the 2020-21 fiscal year are still pending. Information on further final actions in Georgia will be featured in an upcoming edition of *Legislative Report*.

Kentucky (<https://legislature.ky.gov/>)

The Kentucky General Assembly wrapped up its legislative session in mid-April by passing a single-year budget for 2020-21 — instead of the usual biennial budget — due to the COVID-19 emergency. The legislators plan to approve a budget for the second year of the biennium during the next regular legislative session once more information is available regarding the impact of the pandemic on state revenues.

Legislators approved House Bill 352 to provide statewide general funds of \$11.3 billion for 2020-21, a 2.8% decrease from the revised 2019-20 total. This includes \$781.6 million for the Kentucky Teachers' Retirement System, up 8.6%, and \$125.2 million for the school facilities construction commission, down 3%.

General funds for K-12 education fall 0.4% to \$4.1 billion. SEEK formula funding, however, rises 0.4% to just below \$3 billion, including \$425.6 million (up 1.9%) for teacher benefit expenses. The budget maintains the base SEEK per-pupil guarantee amount at \$4,000 and does not include the pay raises for teachers and state employees that lawmakers had hoped, earlier in the legislative session, to provide.

State-funded postsecondary institutions receive \$853.7 million (down 0.8%) which includes \$171.3 million for the Kentucky Community and Technical College System and \$682.4 million for state universities (down 1.9% and 0.6%, respectively). General funds directed to the Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority total \$279.3 million (up 9.9%). Of this amount, Dual Credit Scholarships receive \$13.2 million (up 43.9%); merit-based Kentucky Educational Excellence Scholarships receive \$113.8 million (down 5.5%); Kentucky Tuition Grant program receives \$44.1 million (down 10.35%); the College Access program receives \$87.6 million (down 21.4%); and the Work Ready Kentucky Scholarship program receives \$7.3 million (down 35.6%).

Senate Bill 177, which originally was concerned with beauty services licensure, was amended and enacted as a COVID-19 relief measure for schools, teachers and students affected by school year interruptions due to the outbreak. For the 2019-20 school year, the bill allows school districts to request the use of nontraditional instruction days during the current pandemic to meet the required number of instructional days. While the legislation provides options for schools to complete the required 1,062 instructional hours during the school year, it also specifies that required hours may be waived by existing provisions that allow waivers in the case of state and local emergencies. School districts are permitted to provide additional emergency leave days for staff due to the COVID-19 health emergency, and principals may award additional educational enhancement opportunity days for students to meet postsecondary enrollment requirements. The Kentucky Department of Education is permitted to waive statewide assessment and accountability system requirements in accordance with federal COVID-19 emergency waivers and is directed to seek waivers regarding the National School Lunch Program and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

The Legislature passed Senate Bill 193, which requires the state board of education to establish long-term and annual statewide goals for increasing participation in computer science courses in middle grades and high school by underrepresented groups, including females, minorities, students with disabilities, English language learners, and students whose families are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches. The bill requires the KDE to annually report on the number and percentage of public school students participating in computer science courses and other computer science educational opportunities, the number and nature of courses or programs offered in each school, and the number of computer science instructors at each school.

Relative to school safety, Senate Bill 8 permits local school district superintendents to specify any individual (previously, a district-level school administrator) to serve as the district's school safety coordinator. The measure requires school resource officers to be armed with a firearm and requires each public school districts to have at least one school counselor or school-based mental health services provider for every 250 students.

House Bill 312 requires KDE to develop processes to promote the more expeditious enrollment of students in foster care who are transferring to a new school or district, and the sharing of information among schools, school districts, the Cabinet for Health and Family Services, and a child's caseworker. Licensed child-care facilities and child placing agencies are required to collaborate with local school districts to promote educational stability for children under their care.

Other legislation

SB 63 allows a local school district board to establish a virtual high school completion program for district residents age 21 and older who are high school dropouts to complete high school graduation requirements through virtual instruction; a district may charge tuition and fees for such a program.

SB 101 requires the council on postsecondary education to facilitate the implementation of a standardized articulation agreement for each approved high school career pathway under which a student will be awarded postsecondary credit for prior learning at any public college or university.

SB 134 establishes the Optometry Scholarship Program to provide eligible Kentucky students the opportunity to attend an accredited school of optometry to become certified practitioners rendering medical service.

Maryland (<http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/>)

With the COVID pandemic threat looming, legislators hurriedly completed their work and adjourned in mid-March, more than two weeks ahead of the scheduled conclusion of the 2020 regular session. Legislators had originally intended to meet in a special session in late May but have since cancelled those plans. The \$19.6 billion statewide general fund budget for 2020-21 represents a 1.3% increase over the originally approved prior-year budget. Many of the budget items relating to education were unchanged from the governor's budget submitted in January.

State aid to education totals \$6.6 billion, up 3.4%. Included in this amount is \$3.2 billion in Foundation Program formula funding (up 5.9%), \$1.4 billion to support students from low-income families (up 2.5%), \$474.3 million to educate students with disabilities (up 3.1%), and \$348.2 million for students with limited English proficiency (up 11.9%). The \$350.8 million in special funds for grants to help implement the Blueprint for Maryland's Future (see below) represents a 39.8% increase over the prior year.

Funding for state-supported colleges and universities is up 7.1% to over \$1.6 billion; formula funding to community colleges rises 13.7% to \$304.8 million while general funds for community college employee benefits declines 0.9% to \$62.4 million. The merit-based Educational Excellence Awards program receives \$88.1 million, up 2%; however, the last-dollar Maryland Community College Promise Scholarship Program receives \$11.5 million, a 23.3% decline.

A major focus for legislators as they completed the truncated regular session was passage of House Bill 1300, the Blueprint for Maryland's Future — which enacts recommendations of the Maryland Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education (known as the Kirwan Commission) and is intended to transform the state's K-12 education system so that it is on par with the highest-performing education systems in the world. While the governor vetoed the bill in early May, citing the high costs of implementation in the coming years, legislators are expected to attempt to override the veto when they next convene. Additionally, most of the legislation's provisions would not take effect until 2021-22 and beyond, providing legislators with time to act.

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future has five major areas of concern: early childhood education and support for families; support for and increasing diversity among the ranks of educators and education leaders; student readiness for college and careers; providing additional resources for at-risk students; and accountability in the implementation of the Blueprint.

The legislation mandates an expansion in full-day prekindergarten programs for children ages three and four. Beginning in 2021-22, the state's kindergarten readiness assessment would be administered to all incoming students. The legislation would require all school districts to increase salaries, adopt a statewide minimum teacher salary of \$60,000 by July 2026, and require districts to adopt a four-tier educator career ladder for educators by 2023-24.

The legislation mandates increases in per-pupil funding amounts over an 11-year period for foundation formula funding to schools, special education, English language learners and districts with high numbers of disadvantaged students, and would establish the Concentration of Poverty School Grant program for districts with large percentages of students who qualify for free and reduced-price meals. It would establish an Accountability and Implementation Board to develop an implementation plan for the Blueprint by early 2021 and to monitor districts' success with their local implementation plans, providing or withholding funding based on each district's level of success.

Legislators approved House Bill 1, the Built to Learn Act of 2020, but its enactment is contingent upon House Bill 1300 becoming law; thus, the legislation will not take effect unless legislators override the governor's veto of the latter legislation. House Bill 1 establishes specific amounts of supplemental education funding from the Education Trust Fund, which receives gambling revenues, that would be required in the governor's annually submitted budget; beginning in 2022-23, it would require the entire amount in the fund to be committed to supplemental education funding.

House Bill 277 requires the state department of education to develop guidelines for schools to implement trauma-informed approaches, which will help them identify and appropriately respond to students, teachers and staff who have experienced interpersonal trauma or traumatic stress.

House Bill 415 and Senate Bill 307 modify the last-dollar Community College Promise Scholarship program, specifying that the required minimum 2.3 GPA for a student applies to the student's initial eligibility for an award, but to maintain eligibility while enrolled in community college a student must maintain a minimum GPA of 2.5. The legislation removes program requirements that a recipient commence full-time employment and remain within the state for at least one year after receiving an award, and that the award will convert into a student loan if they fail to meet those requirements. Finally, the legislation requires the Maryland Higher Education Commission to contact each public high school counselor in the state with information on the Promise Scholarship program and post information regarding the program on the commission's website, and also requires each community college in the state to publish Promise Scholarship information on its website.

Senate Bill 446 concerns the disorderly closure of an institution of higher education or a career school in the state, or of a program at an institution or school — defined as the cessation of educational instruction in which the institution did not give students satisfactory time to complete the program, transition students to another program at the institution, or enter into at least one school-to-school teach-out agreement. Under the legislation, institutions must file close-out agreements with MHEC which state that the institution will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that any closure is not disorderly, and that any financial aid debt agreement with a student is, in the event of a disorderly closure, void and may not be recovered, collected or enforced.

In response to concerns over punitive actions that some public schools have taken toward students with unpaid school meal debt, legislators approved Senate Bill 760, which requires a school to communicate with a student's parents when there is a low balance in the student's meal account and before they accrue a meal debt. Further, the school may neither communicate directly with a student about an unpaid meal debt, or in a manner that humiliates, stigmatizes or embarrasses them, and may not in response to that debt require them to wear an identifying mark, complete chores or tasks, or deny a meal to or discard a meal after serving it to that student.

Other legislation

HB 187 and SB 329 require each public college and university in the state with residential housing or a health center to annually submit, beginning in 2021, an outbreak response plan to the state department of public health.

HB 318 and SB 667 require each public university in the state to display in its online course scheduling which courses provide access to all required course materials through free or low-cost digital materials.

HB 998 and SB 501 require the Maryland Department of Health to convene a stakeholder workgroup to recommend a program within or in addition to the Maryland Loan Assistance Repayment

Program for Physicians and Physician Assistants to incentivize medical students to practice in health professional shortage areas and medically underserved areas; the bills also require the state to allocate minimum amounts of funding to the loan repayment program in 2022-23 and beyond.

HB 1029 and SB 224 transfer \$750,000 in funding from grants for pre-apprenticeship, youth apprenticeship and registered apprenticeship jobs training programs to a program to recruit veteran and formerly incarcerated individuals to pre-apprenticeship and registered apprenticeship jobs training programs.

HB 1122 specifies that public colleges and universities in the state are not subject to provisions elsewhere in state law mandating the protection of personal information by state agencies, and instead establishes a set of requirements for the protection of personally identifiable information specific to public institutions of higher education.

HB 1141 requires the Maryland Department of Labor to report annually to the General Assembly on the Apprenticeship Career Training Pilot Program for Formerly Incarcerated Individuals.

SB 294 prohibits a private for-profit institution of higher education or career school in the state (including an online education provider that enrolls state residents) from enrolling new students if, in two out of three consecutive fiscal years preceding or in the two consecutive fiscal years immediately preceding fiscal year 2023, less than 10% of its annual revenue came from a source other than federal funds.

SB 504 establishes, in the office of the state attorney general, a special education ombudsman to serve as a resource for information and support to students, parents and educators regarding special education rights and services.

SB 726 permits a licensed physician assistant to perform the required physical examination for any student entering the state's public school system for the first time.

North Carolina (<https://www.ncleg.gov/>)

The General Assembly convened its mid-biennium "short session" in late April, as previously scheduled, but legislators' immediate concern upon their return was the passage of COVID-19 relief legislation, and they quickly approved and the governor quickly signed two measures: Senate Bill 704, which provides policy relief; and House Bill 1043, the 2020 COVID-19 Recovery Act, which provides emergency relief appropriations. As of this writing, the regular session continues, with expected action on amendments to the 2019-21 biennial budget as well as policy matters.

House Bill 1043 provides \$75 million to the Department of Public Instruction to distribute to public schools for their continued provision of school nutrition services under the National School Lunch and School Breakfast programs through the end of the 2019-20 school year. DPI received \$30 million for public schools to purchase computers and electronic devices for use by students as districts implement distance learning in response to the COVID crisis, with another \$5 million for the purchase of computers and devices for use by educators and school personnel. To improve student internet connectivity by providing community and home internet access points, DPI received \$11 million, plus \$1 million for the installation of extended-reach WiFi devices in school buses. To assist public schools in providing remote instruction, DPI received \$1.5 million, with another \$3 million to help schools provide nondigital instructional materials to students with no or limited home internet connectivity. To protect school information systems, \$4.5 million is provided to establish a statewide school cybersecurity infrastructure.

For the provision of student health supports in response to the COVID crisis, including counseling, health, mental health, psychologist and social worker services, legislators provided \$10 million to DPI for distribution to districts and charter schools. A further \$70 million was allocated to public schools to provide supplemental summer reading and math intervention and support programs for students in kindergarten through grade four whose learning was negatively impacted by the public health crisis. Legislators also allocated \$15 million to be awarded as grants to public schools to defray the costs of providing extended school year services to students with disabilities during the current crisis. Finally, \$5 million is provided for the Extended Learning and Integrated Student Supports Competitive Grant Program in 2019-20 and 2020-21, which will fund independently validated extended learning and integrated student support service programs for at-risk students whose learning has been negatively affected by the COVID-19 crisis.

The 2020 COVID-19 Recovery Act allocates \$25 million to the community college system and \$44.4 million to the state university system to cover institutions' costs associated with moving to online instruction and increased demands on information services, to cover increased costs of providing assistance to staff and students (including counseling services), and to provide for sanitation of and ongoing costs for the operation of institution campuses. A further \$20 million was provided for the university system to distribute to private colleges and universities to cover the cost of moving to online instruction and to provide support to students and families impacted by the COVID-19 crisis.

In addition to the more than \$1.4 billion in nonrecurring funds that the Act allocates for 2019-20, it also allocates approximately \$3.5 billion in federal funding under the CARES Act. Relative to education, this amount includes \$95.6 million from the Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund, \$396.3 million from the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund and \$179.7 million from the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund.

With public school buildings and postsecondary institution campuses across the state closed for the remainder of the 2019-20 academic year, Senate Bill 704 waives a number of education regulations and requirements. The legislation waives required student assessments including end of grade and end of course tests, waives required school report cards for 2019-20 and the required determination of low-performing schools, and waives instructional time requirements in 2019-20 for any school that provided remote instruction. It also waives required school reporting on teacher effectiveness based on Education Value-Added Assessment System data for 2019-20.

Principals are permitted to make grade promotion decisions for students in grade three (in lieu of determinations based on reading assessments), though students in grade four in 2020-21 will be required to take a reading assessment within 10 days of the beginning of the school year. For students in grades three and above in 2020-21, placement into advanced mathematics courses will be at the discretion of each student's mathematics teacher in 2019-20, in lieu of placement based on end-of-grade assessments; however, a student who is not placed into an advanced math course may take the assessment to earn placement.

The legislation permits remote instruction to satisfy instructional time requirements for the 2019-20 school year. Every school district and charter school is required to develop a remote instruction plan for the 2020-21 school year, which must include: how the units will deliver quality instruction to all students, information on how to train teachers and support students and families, plans to use the technology during regular instructional days to help train students in its use, and plans for at least five remote instruction days during the 2020-21 academic year. The legislation also waives or modifies a number of educator preparation program requirements, including: waiving testing and GPA requirements for incoming program participants in the 2020-21 year; providing flexibility for students

to be deemed as having completed their clinical internships; and waiving pedagogy assessments for the 2019-20 academic year. In addition, educators, administrators and school professional personnel are provided one-year extensions for meeting their respective licensure requirements.

Relative to postsecondary education, Senate Bill 704 provides eligibility for community college tuition waivers through the end of 2020 for students who were unable to continue participation in apprenticeship or pre-apprenticeship programs. State universities are prohibited from charging interest on any student debts from March 13 to September 15.

Summaries of any additional final actions by the North Carolina General Assembly will be included in a future edition of *Legislative Report*.

Notes from other SREB states

The governor in **Delaware** in early May, citing the collaborative decision by school and district leaders to close schools for the remainder of the 2019-20 school year (while remaining committed to remote instruction of students) and the disruption this has caused to the testing and evaluation system, ordered a modification to the COVID-19 State of Emergency declaration. Under the order, requirements for educators, applicants or employees to submit school transcripts for salary increases or for license, certificate or job applications is suspended until 90 days after the state of emergency is lifted. It suspends educator content readiness and performance assessment requirements until six months after the emergency is terminated, suspends teacher mentoring requirements for the 2019-20 academic year, and specifies that novice teachers and specialists will advance to the next year of their initial license whether or not they have a completed observation or evaluation for 2019-20. It also provides educators holding licenses with 2020 renewal dates with extra time (six months after termination of the state of emergency) to complete the required 90 hours of professional development. For students in educator preparation programs, it suspends the clinical residency requirement for the 2019-20 school year. Relative to K-12 students, the order suspends instructional hour requirements for the remainder of the 2019-20 school year as long as schools continue to offer remote learning and make reasonable efforts to promote and monitor student attendance. Required statewide student assessments are also suspended for 2019-20.

Legislators in **Delaware**, in late May, approved resolutions to authorize the legislative session to convene virtually. The legislative session had been suspended since January.

In **Florida**, the governor has not yet acted on either the appropriations measure approved by legislators in March or the other education-related legislation summarized in the previous edition of *Legislative Report*. Any updates or changes will be included in a forthcoming edition.

On May 11, the Revenue Estimating Conference in **Louisiana** convened and officially reduced the amount of general funds available in the 2019-20 fiscal year by \$131.9 million, to \$9.6 billion, while dedicated revenues were reduced \$230.6 million, to \$2.4 billion. At the time of this writing, legislators are working to finish an amended 2019-20 budget measure prior to the required sine die adjournment of the regular session on June 1. The Revenue Estimating Conference also on May 11 reduced the forecast available general fund total for 2020-21 by \$904.9 million, to \$9.1 billion, and reduced projected dedicated revenues \$153.2 million to under \$2.4 billion. Because the regular session was suspended in March with the onset of the COVID-19 crisis, on May 22 legislative leaders issued a call for a special legislative session, to begin at the adjournment of the regular session, in order to complete appropriations measures for 2020-21.

After suspending the regular legislative session in March, **Mississippi** legislators met for one day at the beginning of May and approved legislation that designates \$100 million in federal CARES Act funding for use according to executive directions. The remainder of the funding provided to the state, more than \$1.1 billion, can only be used through the legislative appropriations process. Legislators met in the middle of the month to begin determining how to distribute the COVID-19 relief funding. Prior to suspending the session, legislators approved, and the governor subsequently signed, House Bill 1647, which permits school districts to provide paid administrative leave to employees due to a declaration of emergency by the governor. The Legislature resumed its session in late May to take up other business, including approving appropriations measures for 2020-21.

Oklahoma legislators, confronted with a projected shortfall of \$1.3 billion in 2020-21, approved and subsequently overrode gubernatorial vetoes of measures that enact a \$7.7 billion state-funded budget for the upcoming fiscal year. That amount, 2.6% less than the enacted 2019-20 budget, imposes reductions of 4% or more to most agencies, and provides just under \$3 billion for K-12 education, a 2.5% decline. The smaller reduction in K-12 education funding was achieved by directing \$180 million from the Rebuilding Oklahoma Access and Driver Safety Fund and \$234.7 million from the Constitutional Reserve Fund to the state department of education. The 2020 regular legislative session is scheduled to conclude on May 29. More details on these and other final actions from Oklahoma will be in the next edition of *Legislative Report*.

The **South Carolina** Legislature reconvened briefly during the second week of May and approved House Bill 3411, a resolution to continue funding government operations into the 2020-21 fiscal year (which begins July 1) at the 2019-20 levels; legislators plan to reconvene in September to pass an appropriations measure for the remainder of the fiscal year. In addition to the continuing budgetary authority and the appropriation of \$201.5 million from the 2018-19 Contingency Reserve Fund for COVID-19 response measures, the legislation also authorizes the state superintendent of education to exercise emergency powers as a part of the state's COVID response, including waiving testing, assessment and reporting requirements, and granting instructional days to schools based on their provision of distance learning. The legislation also permits the superintendent to encourage districts to utilize summer reading camps and other tools to keep students on grade level, to carry forward state department of education fund balances and to transfer any appropriations made to the department to school districts to assist them as they adjust operations in response to the current health crisis. It also specifies that the 2019-20 statewide teacher salary schedule remains in place and annual salary step increases are suspended until an appropriations act for 2020-21 is enacted.

Tennessee legislators are scheduled to reconvene on June 1. While reductions to the previously approved 2020-21 appropriations act may take priority, other education issues are expected to be considered, including expanded provision of digital learning resources and other ways to provide support that might counteract student learning losses due to statewide school closures in response to the COVID-19 crisis.

In late April, **Virginia** legislators met — under extraordinary health precautions — in the reconvened session, considering and ultimately adopting the governor's recommended budget amendments. With the expectation that state revenues will decline considerably from pre-COVID outbreak estimates, the amendments largely withdrew increases in general fund spending until revenues can recover. Statewide, this meant the withdrawal of \$853.6 million in general fund expenditures in 2020-21, and nearly \$1.4 billion in 2021-22. For the first year of the biennium, the total general fund appropriation of \$22.7 billion is 0.3% less than 2019-20.

General funds for K-12 education are now budgeted to rise 4.7% to nearly \$6.9 billion in the first year of the biennium (the originally budgeted increase was 7.5%) and 2% in the second, to \$7 billion. Among the general funds withdrawn from education was \$288.2 million over the biennium for teacher salary increases, \$83.5 million to maximize early learning access for at-risk three- and four-year-old children, and \$61.3 million to provide additional supports for at-risk students. General funds were similarly withdrawn from institutions of higher education, and legislators halved the funding intended to help minimize undergraduate tuition increases (to \$54.7 million in the first year and \$25 million in the second).

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