

Statewide health care and temporary development moratorium bills to be considered

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In the House Education Committee:

On January 30, the House Education Committee is scheduled to consider [House Bill 1841](#), the statewide health care legislation sponsored by Reps. Dan Surra (D-Elk) and Steve Nickol (R-York). This legislation would require that all schools districts, with the exception of Philadelphia, participate in a statewide health care program.

[House Bill 1841](#) creates a 12-member Health Care Trust Board, consisting of 4 Commonwealth representatives, 4 PSBA representatives, and 4 PSEA representatives. The Board would have the authority to:

- * Conduct a study of current school employee health care offerings statewide
- * Develop a statewide plan of health care coverage for school employees;
- * Determine the standard benefits package and benefit options;
- * Determine the overall per-employee cost of the standard benefits package to the Trust Fund;
- * Determine the total amount of contributions by the Commonwealth, public school entities and school employees.

Decisions made by the Board when exercising these powers will require a "qualified majority vote," with at least 2 members from each represented group voting in the affirmative.

Most importantly, the current version of the bill allows the newly-created Board to conduct the study and proceed with its findings all the way through to implementation. The Board would be required to hold 3 public hearings statewide and submit the proposed plan to the House and Senate Education Committees for comment; however, neither of these actions could actually halt the implementation of the plan.

If your local State representative sits on the House Education committee ([click here for a complete list](#)), please call them and request that they support the O'Neill Amendment (A4174) to HB 1841. The O'Neill Amendment would limit the proposal to the following:

- * creating the Employees Benefit Board;
- * providing for a study of current health care programs; and
- * allowing the board to develop a proposed program of statewide health care benefits or an alternative measures program.

The amendment would prevent implementation of any plan developed by the board unless separate enabling legislation were introduced and approved by the General Assembly.

PSBA believes this amendment is necessary because:

1. The amendment allows the board to make decisions on things such as plan participation and eligibility, plan development and other important items based on information to be gathered by the study; information that is not available now.
2. The amendment offers greater transparency and opportunities to the taxpayers, school entities

and the general assembly to view the proposed plan before it is implemented.

3. As currently drafted, only the legislators who are members of the House and Senate Education Committees would have a review of the plan before implementation. The amendment would allow review by all legislators. Because this bill will affect taxpayers and constituents of all legislators, they should all have an opportunity for review.

4. The amendment would resolve any questions of constitutionality, specifically regarding delegation of powers

5. The amendment would constitute a significant move forward on this issue that would be widely applauded with little or no controversy, and, just as importantly, with a relatively modest expenditure of funds.

6. The results of the study will create a united front wherein school entities, school employees and the commonwealth will be able to justify their support, ease the concerns of their constituent members and taxpayers and successfully minimize opposition from groups with a vested interest in the status quo.

Please email or call the [members of the House Education](#) and voice your support for the O'Neill Amendment.