Insights: Perspectives

North Carolina General Assembly Update | July 23, 2021

JULY 23, 2021

Kilpatrick Townsend's Government Relations Team represents a variety of clients across many industries and in all levels of government, with a focus on the North Carolina General Assembly. Below is an update on the activity at the NC General Assembly this week. Please feel free to contact a member of the team with any questions or visit our website to learn more about our Government Relations practice.

House Budget

The legislature remained relatively quiet this week as the House continues to work on their budget behind the scenes. Next week will be a short work week as many members will be out of state for a legislative conference. We anticipate the House budget to be released soon after they return. Once released, House leadership has indicated they will vote on it within a week.

High School Athletics Oversight

In April, the Joint Legislative Commission on Governmental Operations appointed a Subcommittee on Interscholastic Athletics to investigate the operations of the North Carolina High School Athletics Association (NCHSAA). The Subcommittee was appointed after concerns were raised within the legislature that the NCHSAA has obtained more money and more power than originally intended. This week, the Senate introduced legislation that would eliminate the Association. H91, Accountability and Fair Play in Athletics, would restructure the regulation of high school interscholastic athletics beginning in the 2022-2023 school year. The bill would require the State Board of Education to adopt rules for student participation in athletics for all public school units. A new, seventeen-member Commission would be created to apply and enforce these rules for high school athletics. H91 received a favorable report from the Senate Education and Senate Finance Committees this week and has been referred to Senate Rules.

Medical Marijuana

As mentioned in previous newsletters, the Senate is moving a major piece of legislation that would legalize the use of medical marijuana for qualified patients with a debilitating medical condition. S711, NC Compassionate Care Act, would establish a Medical Cannabis Production Commission and a Medical Cannabis Advisory Board. The Commission would be responsible for issuing 10 medical cannabis supplier licenses. The Advisory Board will review petitions and have the power to add new debilitating medical conditions to the active list.

On Wednesday, the bill was heard in the Senate Finance Committee and passed the committee on a voice vote. The

measure still has to clear two more committees before being considered by the full Senate.

Governor Cooper Press Conference

This week, Governor Cooper and DHHS Secretary Cohen updated the public health guidance in the StrongSchoolsNC Public Health Toolkit for the upcoming school year. The new guidelines urge school districts to require masks indoors for all students and staff in elementary and middle schools, regardless of their vaccination status. The guidance also encourages unvaccinated students and personnel at all schools to wear masks indoors. This change would place the responsibility of issuing mask rules at the local level. The guidance is aligned with the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommendations released in July.

Governor Cooper also announced that the current Executive Order requiring mask mandates in certain settings will expire at the end of July. This will end mask mandates at schools, prisons, health care facilities, public transit, and child care facilities. The State of Emergency order will remain in place.