Education Omnibus Bill – SB 1569

On the whole, SB 1569 is an Education Omnibus Bill that makes several changes to education law impacting pre-K through 12 that apply in the event of a public health emergency. The bill also puts into law several actions taken by Governor Pritzker via executive order during the current COVID-19 crisis. Highlights of the bill include:

- Removal of the requirement for state standardized assessments if the U.S. Department of Education waives the requirement.
- In the event of a public health emergency, allows preschools that receive preschool services grants from the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) to operate during a public health emergency to provide child care to children of essential workers, ages 0-12. Essential workers includes school employees. ISBE will create rules regarding such services.
- In the event of a public health emergency, the State Superintendent of Education may require the use of remote learning days or blended remote learning days by a school district, multiple school districts, regions, or statewide. Blended remote learning days are a hybrid of in-person and remote instruction. When used, remote learning days and blended remote learning days count toward the required 176 pupil attendance days. A district may use an approved e-learning plan during remote or blended remote learning, or create a remote learning or blended remote learning plan.
- Defines what a remote learning plan or blended remote learning plan must address: (1) the accessibility of remote instruction to students in the district; (2) if applicable, reflect state learning standards; (3) a way for students to communicate with teachers, as needed; (4) consider the unique needs of students in special populations; (5) verify how attendance will be taken and participation will be monitored; and (6) address the transition to on-site learning when the need for remote learning or blended remote learning ends.
- In the event of a public health emergency, allows a district to use up to five remote learning or blended remote learning planning days to count toward the required 176 pupil attendance days.
- In the event of a public health emergency, waives the five hour clock hour requirement for a day to count toward pupil attendance.
- During a public health emergency, state requirements for physical fitness are waived.
During a public health emergency, allows ISBE to make rule changes to education requirements for grades 9-12.

During a public health emergency, prohibits a school from withholding a student’s report card due to failure to present evidence of immunization, an eye exam, or dental exam.

For educators trained in other states or countries, adds a requirement that such educators demonstrate proficiency in the English language either by passing an English proficiency test required by ISBE or completing a post-secondary degree program taught in English.

Extends the expiration date of all licenses that expire on June 30, 2020 to June 30, 2021.

Waives the student teaching requirement for candidates who were scheduled to student teach during spring 2020.

During a public health emergency, allows student teachers to complete student teaching requirements through remote learning.

When a tenured teacher received an “excellent” evaluation rating on their most recent evaluation and cannot be evaluated due to a public health emergency, that teacher’s evaluation rating defaults to “excellent,” unless the union and district bargained a process or an alternate rating.

When a probationary teacher received an “excellent” evaluation rating on their most recent evaluation and cannot be evaluated due to a public health emergency, allows the union and the district to bargain an “excellent” rating for these teachers where the rating would normally default to “proficient”.

During a public health emergency, pre-hearing and hearing timelines for tenured teacher dismissal hearings are paused unless the teacher and the district agree, in writing, to move forward and hold the hearing remotely.

During a public health emergency that suspends in-person instruction, timelines to implement and complete a remediation plan are waived.

Absent an agreement in writing to the contrary, tenured teachers who are less than 45 days into a remediation plan when a public health emergency suspends in-person learning restart the 90-day remediation timeline when in-person instruction resumes.

Makes a requirement that a superintendent, a regional office of education, or entity that provides background checks for schools to notify ISBE within 10 days upon learning of a pending criminal charge for an alleged offense against a license holder which, if
convicted, raises grounds for disqualification, suspension, or revocation of that individual’s license under the school code.