



Advocacy Matters Newsletter

Brain Injury Association of New Hampshire June 20, 2020

General Court News- Legislative Activities Suspension

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the General Court has suspended all legislative activities until further notice with the exception of *remote public meetings, notices for which will be published in the House or Senate Calendar*. During this time, the State House and Legislative Office Building will be closed to legislative members, legislative staff, and visitors.

Legislative Update, Teresa Rosenberger, Lobbyist, Devine, Millimet

So where are we now after the House and Senate have convened?

The House met June 11th. The Democrats and Republicans could not agree on process so they are fundamentally done. All bills that were in the possession of the House on June 11th are dead. That means any Senate bills that had moved to the House before COVID or any House bills that had not been voted on before COVID to go to the Senate are dead. Our key bill for this year, SB 584, the return to learn legislation, had passed the Senate and was in the House Education Committee awaiting a hearing. That bill, SB 584, is dead.

The Senate met June 16th in a marathon session. They had met the week before on bills that passed the House and had moved to the Senate for hearings. At the hearings, the Senate Committees added omnibus amendments to the House bills...some 100 pages long. The omnibus amendments in some cases were House bills and Senate bills that both Democrats and Republicans wanted to pass-totally bi-partisan. In other cases, House bills were amended with language the Democrats knew the Republicans did not like and the Governor may veto, such as an increase in minimum wage and family medical leave-totally partisan. In addition to the omnibus amendments, there were a number of floor amendments that came forward and passed during the Senate session (no public hearing)...sometimes unanimously and sometimes in a partisan manner.

Once the Senate passed the bills, they now have to go back to the House for concurrence or non-concurrence. Normally, there is the option of a committee of conference to iron out any differences. Not this year. On June 30th, the House will meet and agree (concur) or disagree (non-concur) with all the bills the Senate passed. It's the belief that all bills will be agreed on by the House. It only takes a majority vote and with the Democrats in the majority, the thought is all will pass. Once the bills are concurred on, they then go to the Governor for signature or veto. Expect many to be signed and a few to be vetoed.

So where is the language that was in SB 584? Thanks to a call from BIA President Steve Wade to the Chair of the House Education Committee, our language for "return to learn" was included in the omnibus amendment to HB 1558. The Chair of the Senate Education Committee was all too happy to include it as SB 584 had passed his Committee and the Senate unanimously. The Senate passed HB 1558 unanimously so let's just hope the House concurs and the Governor signs HB 1558.

There were number of other bills that passed the Senate unanimously. One bill, HB 1623, codifies the Governors Emergency Order on telemedicine. Telehealth visits will be reimbursed just as a visit in a health care facility. Another bill, HB 1280, has multiple policies to bring down prescription drug prices. However, HB 1246, establishing a COVID-19 nursing home and long term care fund as well as an independent review of COVID practices, was a partisan vote. The Governor has already created the fund.

This was an extraordinary session. The House has been sidelined over partisan fighting. The Senate certainly took the lead in all that is passing. There was good bi-partisanship in the Senate on many issues and any disagreements were polite.

I expect next year to be packed with all the hundreds of pieces of legislation that did not pass this year and more.

The Power of the Disability Vote - June 22, 2020, 6 PM

Here is the link to register: <https://ablenh.wildapricot.org/event-3850722>