



from the South Carolina Education Oversight Committee
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For Immediate Release

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EOC policy and budget recommendations focused on supporting educators and improving college and career readiness among students

EDITOR'S NOTE: *The EOC held a full meeting today at 1:00 p.m. at the Blatt Building in Columbia. Recommendations to the budget were made at this meeting.*

Columbia – Today, South Carolina Education Oversight Committee (EOC) members adopted budget recommendations for the 2016-17 fiscal year. The programmatic and funding recommendations made are designed to accelerate improvements in student and school performance by better preparing students for success in careers or in postsecondary education.

Committee members annually make recommendations for the spending of Education Improvement Act (EIA) funds, which are generated by the penny sales tax. In November, the Board of Economic Advisors projected that the EIA will generate \$716 million in total revenues in fiscal year 2016-17, an increase of \$54.9 million over the current year's EIA appropriation base.

"These public funds should be targeted to help ensure that students and teachers have what is necessary for students to be college and career ready," said Bob Couch, chairman of the subcommittee that brought initial recommendations to the full committee Monday. "The recommendations made focus on providing students with the opportunities they need to be successful, in addition to supporting those educators in the classroom who set the high expectations for themselves and the young people in their classrooms."

Highlights of the recommendations, which now head to the General Assembly and the Governor for consideration during next year's legislative session, include:

- **Supporting Educators: Improving Teacher Salaries**
The committee recommended reallocating current, available appropriations to improving the overall teacher salary schedule or to the Rural Teacher Initiative. Unexpended funds from the recurring EIA appropriations for National Board Certification and Teacher Salary Supplement and Fringe Benefits could be reallocated to an initiative to increase the statewide minimum teacher salary for teachers with less than five years of experience. The committee also recommended that an outside expert would be consulted to develop a teacher salary schedule that would develop, attract, and retain high quality teachers.

To further support educators, the committee recommended fully funding individual teacher supply stipends at \$275, up from \$250.

- **Supporting Educators: Recruiting teachers of STEM**

The committee recommended allocating EIA funds to develop an initiative to recruit highly qualified STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) teachers at the secondary levels in rural communities. While student interest in STEM is growing, there is a dwindling supply of teachers in these subject areas.

- **Student College and Career Readiness: Assist students in their next steps**

The EOC supported new funding of \$300,000 for STEM Premier, a digital platform for students to showcase their skills, talents, interests, and assessment scores to colleges and companies. The goal of the initiative is to help students in choosing their path after graduation. The platform is an innovative, technology-based approach to furthering the goals of the Education and Economic Development Act.

- **Student College and Career Readiness: Increased funding for Middle Schools that Work and High Schools that Work**

The goals of the Middle Schools that Work and High Schools that Work programs are to have 85% of all students meeting college and career ready standards in reading, mathematics and science and achieve a 90 percent graduation rate. Currently, school districts have to absorb much of the \$8,000 cost of the program. The committee recommends a \$1.3 million increase in EIA funds, which would fully fund the programs.

- **Student College and Career Readiness: Incentivize schools for performance on national industry exams**

National industry exams can typically cost as much as \$100 a student, but are very valuable for students who are ready to enter the workforce. The committee recommends a phase in approach, fully instituting the incentive program by FY 2019-20.

- **Student College and Career Readiness: Initiate a Computer Science Initiative**

The EOC recommended that a Computer Science Initiative, a public-private partnership, be implemented in FY2016-17 to determine a timeline for phasing in a requirement that all secondary schools offer computer science. Twenty-seven states allow computer science to count toward high school math or science graduation requirements. Computer science instruction could also be a requirement of each career cluster.

- **Student College and Career Readiness: Establish College Readiness Benchmarks**

The committee recommended that the Commission on Higher Education and the Technical College System adopt benchmarks as college readiness indicators with at least one of the indicators being the college readiness assessment that all 11th graders in South Carolina take. Students scoring at or above the scores indicated would not be required to take remedial courses in English language arts or mathematics and would be allowed to enter into college credit-bearing coursework.

The EOC also approved a recommendation to expand initiatives to recruit and train leaders for schools and districts, focused on the areas of instruction management and leadership.

The SC Education Oversight Committee is an independent, non-partisan group made up of 18 educators, business persons, and elected leaders. Created in 1998, the committee is dedicated to reporting facts, measuring change, and promoting progress within South Carolina's education system.