

Issues Update is a report from the Kentucky Association for Career and Technical Education (KACTE) written by Executive Director Michael R. Stone and shared with members. As needed, *Issues Update* will report on state and federal Career and Technical Education (CTE) policy and legislative developments. KACTE and Stone can be reached at kmstone1951@gmail.com or 502-223-1823.

General Assembly Enhances CTE in Kentucky

It was the last day of the 2024 Kentucky General Assembly session, April 15, when the Senate passed **HB499** on a 37-1 vote and the House concurred with a minor floor amendment and passed it 95-0. Three days later, Gov. Andy Beshear signed it into law. The legislation, drafted primarily by the Kentucky Department of Education Office of Career and Technical Education (OCTE) and fully supported by the Kentucky Association for Career and Technical Education (KACTE) codifies a new funding method for secondary CTE in Kentucky to ensure access to high-quality CTE classes. It also establishes incentives for schools and students to achieve success.

The distribution of the \$127 million (\$70 million of which is directed to local centers) included in **HB6**, the Executive Branch budget bill, will be divided into two categories for distribution:

1. Sixty percent of the funding will be based on the value of weighted full-time equivalents (FTEs) for each program.
2. Forty percent of the funding will be based on the following four incentives:
 - Concentrators (students taking two or more credits in a pathway to gain marketable skills and knowledge related to a career path);
 - Technical skill attainment (passing an industry certification or end-of-program exam);
 - Work-based learning; and
 - Approved CTE dual credit.

A **SECOND ISSUE** advocated for by KACTE urged consideration for additional funding through the budget process for construction and maintenance of CTE facilities. **HB6** contained a \$7.5 million appropriation for Secondary Area Technology Center Renovation in 2025-26.

The FFA Leadership Training Center received \$1 million to complete the Rising Sun Center, which is scheduled for ground breaking in August. An additional \$500,000 was allocated to complete renovation of five cabins, and a pool of funds will be available for safety upgrades on the grounds.

Additional budget highlights impacting secondary CTE in Kentucky include: \$7.8 million in both years for vocational transportation, \$8 million for the School for the Blind, and \$11 million for the School for the Deaf each year.

Postsecondary education was funded at almost

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Pictured, from left, KACTE Region 2 Representative Kelli Norman, Council on Postsecondary Education; Taylor Stewart, Family and Consumer Sciences teacher, Drake's Middle School; Congressman Brett Guthrie; Traci Blanford, Family and Consumer Sciences teacher, Washington County High School.

KACTE Visits Congress During 2024 Policy Meeting

A KACTE delegation led by President-Elect Christi Hack, principal, Jessamine Career Technology Center; and Treasurer Dexter Knight, University of Kentucky; visited the offices of Kentucky's eight members of Congress on March 18-19. While seven of the meetings were with congressional staff, the delegation did meet personally with District 2 Representative Brett Guthrie (pictured above).

During the visits, KACTE delivered information showing the success and impact of Career and Technical Education (CTE) in Kentucky. They asked for continued funding of the Carl Perkins Career and Technical Education Act and for aligning reauthorization of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and the Higher Education Act with CTE programs.

Subsequent to the visit, Congress completed Fiscal Year 2024 appropriations, including a \$10 million increase to Perkins Act funding. In the President's Fiscal Year 2025 budget, the Perkins Act is proposed for a \$40 million increase. On April 9, the House passed its version of WIOA reauthorization. Now before the Senate, KACTE will continue advocating for meaningful connections between CTE and workforce systems.

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\$12.5 billion each year, with the Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS) funded at just over \$1 billion each year.

The Work-Ready Kentucky Scholarship Program received \$20 million each year, and the Dual Credit Scholarship Program received \$13 million each year.

For education overall, SEEK funding is \$3.2 billion (\$4,326 per student) in 2024-25, and \$3.3 billion (\$4,586 per student) in 2025-26. Teachers' retirement will get \$887.5 million in 2024-25, and \$1 billion in 2025-26. Health insurance will receive \$942 million in 2024-25, and \$1 billion in 2025-26. The Educators Employment Liability Insurance Program got \$5 million each year.

AS USUAL, EDUCATION BILLS were prevalent in the General Assembly session. The following bills that may have an impact on Career and Technical Education passed. Details of each can be accessed at <https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/record/24rs/record.html>.

SB2 enhances numerous elements for school safety.

SB127 establishes the Kentucky Aerospace, Aviation, and Defense Investment Fund Advisory Committee.

SB164 allows articulation agreements between licensed proprietary schools and public school districts or state area technology centers to establish academic or training equivalencies needed to obtain licensure in trades.

SB265 modifies alternative teacher certification.

SJR132 directs the Council on Postsecondary Education to conduct a study on transforming the Hazard Community and Technical College into a four-year, residential university.

Kentucky Senate Confirms Dr. Robert Fletcher as Commissioner of Education

Lawrence County Superintendent Dr. Robbie Fletcher is the new Kentucky Commissioner of Education. He was nominated by the Kentucky Board of Education and confirmed by the Kentucky Senate April 15. He will begin his duties leading the Kentucky Department of Education on May 1, 2024.

He received his bachelor's degree from Morehead State, earned a master's degree from the University of Kentucky, and got his doctorate and certification from Morehead State. He was a math and science teacher at Bourbon County Schools before his first administrative assignment as assistant principal at Inez Middle School in his native Martin County. He progressed to principal at Warfield Middle School and Sheldon Clark High School. He was hired as superintendent at Lawrence County in 2014.

HB22 requires automated external defibrillators in schools.

HB162, establishes math education coursework.

HB377 establishes a teacher loan forgiveness program.

HB444 modifies experience and education requirements for an electrician or master electrician license

HB449 adds additional types of evidence permitted to document a board of education candidate's qualifications.

HB535 requires, beginning with the freshman class of 2025-26, a one-half credit course in civic literacy for graduation.

HB535, mandates a secondary civic education course.

Kentucky Teachers' Retirement System

Kentucky Teachers' Retirement System (KTRS) General Counsel Beau Barnes updated the Kentucky General Assembly Public Pension Oversight Board at an April 22 meeting. He said **HB1** and **HB6** allocated significant resources toward the KTRS plan. He highlighted:

- Full or nearly full funding of annuity plans for 10 straight years;
- More than \$1.75 billion to meet actuarially required contribution for annuities;
- \$161 million for state statutory contribution for under-65 health insurance; and
- An additional \$80 million beyond the requested amounts appropriated in **HB1** and **HB6**.

He noted that for the period ending Dec. 31, 2023, the return on the pension annuity fund was more than 14 percent, which placed KTRS in the top 5 percent of public pension plan returns. The health insurance trust earned more than 14.5 percent.

He advised there was a minor negative cash-flow position, but he said some negative cash flow is expected as long as it does become unmanageable.

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