Lobbyist Report

*March 24, 2021*

While the NC General Assembly spent most of the beginning of the 2021 long session working on COVID-related bills, they have now started to move on to other issues. However, the overall number of bills being filed has been much lower than in long sessions. But that could change closer to the bill filing deadlines – April 20th in the House and April 6th in the Senate – when we usually see a very large number of bills being filed.

In-Person Learning

SB220, The Reopen our Schools Act of 2021 was passed by the legislature and signed into law by the governor. This bill calls for all students, K-12, to be offered in-person instruction for the remainder of the 2020-2021 school year. The local school boards must also continue to offer the option of remote learning for students to elect to participate in at the discretion of their parent/guardian.

Budget

Marking the start of the budget process, Governor Cooper will be releasing his budget proposal this week. The legislature will then begin closed-door discussions on their own budget. With the revenue forecast from the Office of State Budget and Management predicting an extra $4.1 billion in revenue for the 2020-2021 fiscal year, there will be no shortage of discussions on how to spend the extra money.

Medicaid Expansion

Governor Cooper continues to call on the legislature to expand Medicaid in press conferences and during visits to vaccine centers. The legislature has remained defiant to the idea. What remains to be seen is whether, like in 2019, the governor will demand that Medicaid expansion be included in the budget bill before he will sign it.

Opioids

As far as opioid issues go, we have been meeting with legislators about the chiropractic profession’s ability to help with the opioid epidemic. Senators Krawiec and Burgin (both Senate Health Committee Chairs) were supportive and asked for data on the issue, which we supplied them with. Senator Hise is still a supporter and is looking for ways to help us on this issue. We have been told that there have been discussions about opioids, but there hadn’t been a definite decision made about whether there would be a large opioid bill. We are continuing to meet and work with legislators to find the best way to open the door for chiropractors to be a part of the solution for the opioid epidemic.