

The most important news from this week's legislative activity is the beginning work on our budget. As I shared in my quick email yesterday afternoon, the work session on the community college support fund budget as well as the budget for the Department of Community Colleges and Workforce Development has begun. The revised allocation in the co-chairs budget is now \$500 million for the community college support fund. The budget for the Department has also increased slightly from the original recommendation. Much of yesterday's hearing was taken up with explanations of the performance measures by which community college progress and the Department's efforts are evaluated.

As we look at the actual budget documents there are also a few policy option packages that are worth noting. The Governor's recommended budget had several improvements that the first co-chairs budget removed. This new proposal restores all but four of them and makes a money change on debt service. Not included in the new proposal are funds for the Career Pathways initiative (just under \$1 million), \$150,000 for Virtual Learning, or \$10 million for Skill-up. Also not included was the start up money for Workforce and Career Readiness Certificates. Legislative Fiscal also reduced the allocation for debt service by \$1.6 million – not because they took something out but because they were able to forecast a more favorable interest rate.

The work session will resume Monday afternoon at 3 p.m. We expect that the budget will move out of committee Monday afternoon but we've also been expecting the K-12 budget to move for several days now and it seems to be hung up on a procedural nail.

We are, we believe, only three weeks from sine die so you may be hearing from me more often than weekly as our most important issues hurdle to the finish line. On the other hand, we could find ourselves in some sort of alternate time reality and we'll still be chatting into August. Don't think so though. Legislators are having serious discussions about getting out of the building.