

April 4, 2020

NBSIA Legislative Update

COVID-19 has thrown California legislative activities into a never-before-seen pattern. Governor Newsom scratched the proposed budget he laid out in January 2020 and said he will only sign a budget that focuses solely on COVID-19 related spending. Legislators are voluntarily shelving most of their introduced bills. This is a much different session year than anyone could have imagined in January.

Unemployment

California's Unemployment Insurance (UI) system is nearly bankrupt, broken by the demand from over 1.3 million new claims, with hundreds of thousands of claims still being filed weekly. Some of the dollars in the federal \$2 trillion pandemic response bill will flow to the California UI system but that will not be enough to fill the cratering UI Benefit Trust Fund (UIBTF). President Trump's new order extending social distancing through April 30 is not going to help.

The Administration is also considering allowing gig workers and others to draw unemployment insurance benefits and use UIBTF dollars to pay for it as a 'socialized' cost to all employers, public and private. Since the UIBTF is 100% employer funded, this will almost certainly lead to a huge UI tax increase at some point late this year or early 2021.

Whether the Legislature will act on AB 5 (*Dynamex* decision) relief is still up in the air at this point.

Budget

As mentioned above, the Governor tossed out his original proposed budget issued in January 2020. One of the main reasons is that the tax filing deadline has been moved to a later date this year, July 15. With this change, the state will not know how much money it will have to use for budget appropriations until after that date.

In the meantime, the Governor and the Legislature will pass a bare bone, baseline budget to minimally fund state and local agencies, as well as other emergency measures to pay for the fight against COVID-19. A supplemental budget will then occur sometime after July 15. Both legislative budget committees have confirmed this as the plan of action as of now.

As a side note: If a state budget is not passed by June 15 each year, legislators and constitutional officers permanently forfeit pay for all days until a budget is passed and signed. Because this was a voter-approved ballot proposition, it cannot be suspended even in a crisis.

The administration is also aware that several new multi-billion-dollar tax ballot initiatives they thought would be easily approved by voters are likely to either be pulled or fail, including the proposed school bond. Even in the recent early March election, voters were pushing back on passing taxes, approving only half of what was proposed. This was a marked change from the prior election, when nearly 70% of new taxes were approved.

Like most everyone else, the Administration is not looking much beyond addressing current and future impacts from COVID-19, including the financial crisis that is following hard on the heels of the necessary but drastic social response. California is in full crisis mode, and billions of dollars are flowing out of the state's rainy day fund to help meet the health and economic needs of the thousands that need it now and the hundreds of thousands that are still to come.

Governor, COVID-19 and Schools

On April 1, 2020, the Governor announced a major agreement between teachers, classified employees, school boards, superintendents, and principals, to provide distance learning to California's students as a result of school closures. The agreement empowers teachers to create lessons within clear parameters and means more kids will continue to receive critical school resources.

The agreement includes a collaboration framework for school employers and employees to work together on labor/management matters, including implementation and delivery of distance learning, special education services, and meals through the end of the school year. This collaboration should minimize the educational impact to students.

Endorsing organizations include the following: California Department of Education, Association of California School Administrators, California Teachers Association, California School Boards Association, California Federation of Teachers, California County Superintendents Educational Services Association, California School Employees Association, California Association of School Business Officials, Service Employees International Union, Small School Districts' Association, AFSCME California, and the California Labor Federation.

The Governor also announced a partnership with Google to provide resources to students in rural areas, to facilitate distance learning. Specifically, Google will be donating Chromebooks and 100,000 mobile hotspots that provide free and unlimited high-speed Internet connectivity for the remainder of the school year. The California Department of Education will be distributing these resources, prioritizing rural communities. A copy of the framework is attached for your reference.

SB 117

As NBSIA members may know, one bill – SB 117 – was enacted just before the Legislature recessed as an urgency measure to help Pre-K-12 schools. The bill became effective once signed by the Governor.

SB 117 provisions include:

School Funding

- Provides full Average Daily Attendance (ADA) for schools even if they are closed due to coronavirus with the stated intent to ensure that employees and contractors are compensated and paid during the time that a school is closed due to the coronavirus.
- Provides full ADA for After-School Education and Safety (ASES) programs that are closed due to the coronavirus.
- Provides \$100 million to school districts for the purchase of personal protective equipment, and/or pay for supplies and labor related to cleaning school sites – with a minimum of \$250 per school site.

Assessments

- Extends the testing window for the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) by the length of time a school is closed or until the end of the testing window whichever comes first.
- Provides a 45-day extension for schools to administer English Learner proficiency assessments.
- Extends the timeline that schools have to develop an assessment plan to determine if a student has exceptional needs, from 15 days after the referral to an additional number of days that the school is closed, up until the school reopens and the regular school session reconvenes.

Instructional Time

 Waives the required instructional days and minutes during a school closure due to the coronavirus.

State-Subsidized Childcare and Development Programs

 California State Preschool, General Childcare, CalWORKs childcare and Alternative Payment Programs will have their attendance and reporting requirements waived subject to guidance from the State Superintendent of Public Instruction to ensure the continuity of payments.

Charter Schools

 Charter schools without an independent study program or distance learning program in their approved charter school petition are not required to revise their petitions to offer these programs during coronavirus closures.

Uniform Complaint Procedures

 Timelines for the Uniform Complaint Procedures are extended by the length of the school's closure due to coronavirus.

Labor Actions

Organized labor has delivered a letter to the Governor and the Legislature demanding a broad swath of new COVID-19 presumptions and protections for "essential workers" including teachers. A copy of that letter is attached for review. The rumor mill says that the Governor and Assembly and Senate leadership is anxious to get moving on this expansive proposal.

The good news is that the Governor has no authority to impose presumptions by executive action. While the Governor has lots of leeway to suspend laws, he has no ability to unilaterally impose new laws. A consortium of organizations is working to craft a response to the Labor Fed letter, to be delivered to the Legislature in the coming weeks. Any feedback on this from NBSIA members would be welcome (copy of Labor Fed Letter follows below).

Where do we go from here?

At this point in the session, NBSIA is tracking approximately 165 pieces of legislation. This was winnowed down from over 270 bills by NBSIA staff. Overall, the Legislature has introduced over 2,350 bills in 2020. Unless something changes dramatically in the next few weeks, it is likely that most of these will die without a hearing due to the COVID-19 crisis. Currently, the Legislature is on recess until May 4, 2020, unless the leadership decides to extend the recess period further.

No Legislative Committee hearings are scheduled at this time. Committee Chairs are leaning hard on bill authors, telling them that if a bill is very important and absolutely must be considered this year, the April 24 policy committee hearing deadline still applies (although it is unclear how those hearings would be accomplished). Otherwise, they are telling authors to shelve their bills.

Currently, the Legislature is set to return on May 4. Most believe that this the recess will be extended to May 30.

If you have any questions or need further information, please do not hesitate contact NBSIA.

Julianne Broyles
Strategic Research and Communications
April 2020

Framework for Labor-Management Collaboration: Serving Local Communities During the COVID-19 Emergency

Issued: April 1, 2020

I. Introduction and Purpose

The COVID-19 emergency has generated unprecedented and myriad challenges for school communities across California. School leaders representing both employers and employees have managed these uncertainties to the best of their abilities.

Moving forward, this framework—jointly endorsed by the undersigned state leadership—is intended to provide basic principles for how school employers and employees should collaborate, including the involvement of local exclusive representatives in resolving employment issues.

Many local agencies and bargaining units have already resolved issues impeding progress on school priorities. This framework is not intended to disrupt those arrangements, especially insofar as they help address the urgent need to serve students while ensuring staff safety. Rather, this framework is intended to assist those still working to reach agreement and to spur collaboration, including local agencies and bargaining units, as the challenges created by the COVID-19 emergency continue to emerge.

This framework represents the basic principles for local agreements. Parties are encouraged to address additional local needs through open, ongoing, and frequent communication and collaboration.

Endorsing Organizations:

California Department of Education

Association of California School
Administrators

California Teachers Association

California School Boards Association

California County Superintendents
Educational Services Association

California Association Services Association

California County Superintendents

Officials AFSCME California

Small School Districts' Association

II. Governor's Executive Order (EO N-26-20)

On March 13, 2020, the Governor issued an executive order to ensure continued funding for schools suspending in-person instruction due to COVID-19.

Pursuant to the executive order, the following principles apply:

- All pay and benefits for K-14 school employees shall continue through the 2019-2020 budget year as all K-14 schools, county offices of education, and colleges receive full-year funding. Requirements to maintain ADA and instructional days have been waived in order to facilitate this mandate for K-12. This should include temporary, hourly, exempt and non-exempt, as well as probationary employees as LEAs determine they would otherwise have been paid during this period of closure.
- "Essential services" during school closures should be developed in consultation with the
 exclusive representative and following operative public health directives. Special
 consideration of employees deemed essential should be made for employees with
 dependents or with higher-risk conditions for COVID-19, as needed to protect their
 health and/or make arrangements for dependent care.
- Subject to Executive Orders, current law, regulations and guidance, no employee should have accrued leave deducted for taking time needed to comply with a medical professional's recommendations, including to self-quarantine, secure one's own health, or secure the health of one's household during the COVID-19 crisis. Employees with dependent-care needs, who are not absent for health reasons listed above, should not have accrued leave deducted for failing to report unless their employer has offered nocost childcare for the duration of work hours and the employee has declined.

III. Work Functions During Closures

The following principles should guide the assignment of work functions:

- Districts should work with the exclusive representative to address critical public health concerns while seeking to balance staff assignments and workloads.
- Parties should continue to deliver education to students through any practical means, including distance learning and/or independent study. In order to continue to serve students, both credentialed and classified staff may need to perform functions that are reasonably similar to their typical roles prior to the COVID-19 emergency, but nothing in this section should be construed to relieve the district of its obligation to negotiate additional duties with the exclusive representative.
- Meals should continue to be provided to students in need, utilizing measures that protect the safety of both students and school staff.

- Districts should work with faculty and staff to arrange for supervision of students during regular school hours to the extent practicable, in consultation with public health and other authorities.
- Emergency declarations have not suspended obligations to bargain with exclusive representatives. The first priority must be essential service to the public while maintaining employee safety. Recognizing the need may arise to take significant and time-sensitive actions, parties are still expected to fulfill this obligation as soon as is practicable. Districts should not condition employee wage increases or benefits on expeditious approval of agreements.

IV. Compliance with Directives and Guidelines

The following principles should guide compliance with public health directives:

- Districts should implement clear plans to ensure health and safety following all relevant county health guidelines. Districts shall, to the extent practicable, acquire adequate personal protective equipment (PPE) recommended by public health officials, including, but not limited to, gloves, face masks, hand soap, hand sanitizer, and disinfectant, for all open classrooms, workspaces, or assignments. PPE shall be made available to the extent reasonably possible and consistent with CDPH and CDC guidelines (whichever has the highest protective standards). If appropriate PPE is unavailable, safety precautions consistent with public health official guidance should be followed to minimize risk of exposure. Districts shall consult with the exclusive representatives to determine what appropriate training will be provided for all employees who continue to work during closures utilizing various modalities.
- From 3/17/2020 CDE letter to school districts: "Please continue to be guided by federal, state, and local public health authorities in your decision-making. We believe that public health and education officials, in collaboration, are best positioned to measure and balance these very difficult, and often competing, considerations. Continue to collaborate with your city and county officials on how best to work within your community and we encourage all members of the school community, administrators, employees, and families, to communicate and consult with one another as we plan and implement services for students."
- All districts and exclusive representatives should work together to find the best path for the students, the staff, and communities. The exclusive representative should be treated as partners regarding information gathering, developing plans, and decision-making.
- Regular communication should be provided to all employees, students, families and
 exclusive representatives to ensure all parties have the most current information on
 changes, decisions, and rationale for decisions. Districts should inform employees and
 their exclusive representative of higher-risk factors as defined by health authorities.
 Employees should notify the district if they have been exposed to COVID-19 or require
 special consideration due to risk factors.

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March 27, 2020

Governor Gavin Newsom State of California State Capitol Sacramento, CA 95814

President pro Tempore Toni Atkins California State Senate State Capitol, Room 205 Sacramento, CA 95814

Speaker Anthony Rendon California State Assembly State Capitol, Room 219 Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: COVID-19 Relief for Workers

Dear Governor Newsom, President pro Tempore Atkins, and Speaker Rendon:

The California Labor Federation thanks you for the actions the Governor and Legislature have taken to protect and support Californians during the COVID-19 pandemic.

COVID-19 poses a grave threat to public health, worker safety, and to the economy of the state. We are facing an economic downturn that could be more devastating and cause more human suffering than even the Great Recession. For those reasons, the Labor Movement urges that the Administration, Senate, and Assembly work together to take swift and decisive measures to protect and support working people in California. We recommend the following:

Appropriate, Adequate, and Accessible Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and Breaks

Health care workers, firefighters, EMS and rescue personnel, front line law enforcement officers, grocery and pharmacy clerks, transportation workers, classified school employees, and other "essential critical infrastructure" (ECI) workers are on the frontlines of fighting COVID-19. Health care workers treating COVID-19 patients are especially in dire need of appropriate PPE to protect their health and to stop the spread. The state must ensure that workers have personal protective equipment that is appropriate to their workplaces and to protecting against this novel virus. Workers need adequate, accessible supplies of equipment that they can access as needed, and not only with the approval of management, which may have an incentive to limit or ration supplies.

Workers also need protected time for sanitation breaks to wash their hands, sanitize workstations, and get PPE and supplies. The state should mandate that employers of essential critical infrastructure (ECI) workers, (as defined in California Executive Order N-33-20 and as outlined at https://www.cisa.gov/identifying-critical-infrastructure-during-covid-19) that come into contact with the public and have a risk of exposure, provide adequate sanitation supplies, as well as regular time to use them. Employers should also be required to provide sanitary and stocked bathrooms and hand-washing stations for employees. These requirements can be promulgated and enforced through Cal/OSHA to protect the health of all ECI workers, whether in health care or food service.

The emergency rulemaking process must begin immediately to have any hope of achieving these standards in time to save ECI workers' lives. If ever there was a worker safety crisis calling for urgent emergency rulemaking, this is it. In the meantime, Cal/OSHA should also begin drafting and quickly releasing whatever guidance documents are necessary to ensure that employers have all the information they need to keep workers safe.

ECI workers on the frontlines of the COVID-19 crisis face unprecedented issues at work. Concerns about health and safety, PPE, sanitation, potential exposure, serving a frightened and agitated public, and heightened stress and anxiety make everyone's jobs more difficult. Employees in these difficult situations sometimes need advocacy so that they can address their full attention to their role of public service in an emergency. Union representatives that are versed in worksite protections and health, safety training, and some limited distribution of needed materials to ensure protection of the workforce, play an important role in the maintenance of focus and effort during any crisis. They also have knowledge of quickly evolving state and federal orders, which can assist workers, their supervisors, and other emergency personnel to manage any misunderstanding or grievances and return to the important tasks at hand. For those reasons it is important that union representatives be deemed ECI workers.

Workers' Compensation Presumption related to COVID-19

Workers on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic put their lives at risk just doing their jobs. If they are infected with COVID-19, the workers' compensation system must quickly provide medical and indemnity benefits – such workers should not have to fight denials and delays while fighting for their lives. The state should mandate a presumption that contracting COVID-19 or exposure to and physician ordered quarantine due to COVID-19 is conclusively determined to arise out of and in the course of employment for all health care workers, firefighters, EMS and rescue personnel, front line law enforcement officers, and ECI workers for the period of this crisis.

Health care workers especially not only face potential exposure to disease, but the added stress and trauma of hospital shortages, overcrowding, and triage measures used in countries like China, Spain, and Italy. The state should mandate a presumption for workers' compensation that a post-traumatic stress disorder diagnosis is conclusively determined to arise out of and in the course of employment for workers providing direct patient care. The COVID-19 pandemic is not just a health care crisis, it is a mental health crisis and we need to take post-traumatic stress in our health care workers seriously. We cannot expect workers to risk their own lives and still deny them the compensation and care they need when they get sick.

Ensure Unemployment Insurance and All Benefit Programs are Accessible to All Workers

The unions of California are standing up for gig workers. Gig workers and independent contractors who are misclassified by their employers are entitled to Unemployment benefits under existing law. We urge the state to immediately presume these workers eligible for UI benefits upon their documentation of income from those companies. Many of those companies are worth billions, yet illegally withheld crucial protections from their workers. Now they are putting the state's UI fund at risk of insolvency and should be billed retroactively for back payments into the fund for workers.

Similarly, the entertainment industry workers have "gig-like" jobs in that they work sporadically for different companies, though they are employees. The traditional benefit and paid leave programs like SDI and UI do not account for the unique work arrangements of the industry. For those reasons, we urge that any changes to state benefit programs account for non-standard work arrangements such as a look-back at wages and different ways to combine and calculate eligible wages from multiple sources for purposes of benefit determination.

In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) workers do not receive the same benefits as traditional workers, yet they take great risk caring for the most vulnerable to COVID-19 in many cases. We urge the state to ensure all home care providers, including parent and spouse providers, qualify for all protections afforded to traditional workers – including paid family leave, unemployment insurance, workers' compensation, and short-term disability, as well as implementing a blanket expansion of paid sick leave to allow workers to self-quarantine when necessary.

Construction, especially of infrastructure, is one of the best ways to reboot an ailing economy. Another way to ensure the solvency of the UI fund and keep the economy afloat is to ensure that construction workers are declared essential workers statewide and in local jurisdictions. Construction workers are in work sites where social distancing is possible and are already trained in health and safety procedures. Some construction is deemed essential, yet as the state faces a looming economic recession, all construction should be essential to keep workers on the job and to build much-needed housing, infrastructure, hospitals, and other critical needs.

Due to the increase in demand for UI the state should significantly increase staffing at EDD. The state can also direct EDD to streamline benefit issuance to speed up the time between filing and receiving a check, as was done during the last Recession. Lastly, the state should consider creating a special fund for undocumented immigrants who are likely ineligible for the UI program yet need benefits when laid off from their jobs.

Job-Protected and Paid Leave to Cover All Workers

We urge a guarantee of job-protected leave for all workers under the California Family Rights Act (CFRA), regardless of employer size, hours worked, or tenure. That includes expanding the definition of serious health conditions to include an individual quarantined due to a public health emergency. All ECI workers should be given up to 14 paid sick days for the duration of the pandemic so they may take paid time to care for themselves or family. Employers should also permit workers to self-certify if they need medical or caregiving leave due to a public health emergency like coronavirus to ease the burden on the health system and adhere to public health guidance to avoid medical settings.

Backfill Employee Funded Leave Programs

As proposals to expand California's Paid Family Leave (PFL) and State Disability Insurance (SDI) Programs move forward, the Administration must consider the long-term stability of these funds, which are completely worker funded. To prevent potential tax increases on working families during this health emergency and the likely economic upheaval afterward, the Administration should use one-time budget allocations to backfill the SDI and PFL funds to ensure their solvency through this crisis and prevent workers from bearing all the burden.

No Waivers for Meet and Confer Requirements

During this emergency it is important to maintain clear lines of communication between Labor and management to adequately address the needs of the public. California's public sector collective bargaining statutes currently have adequate flexibility allowing employers to take the actions they deem necessary during emergencies while also meeting and conferring on the impacts those decisions could have on the workforce. Waivers of meet and confer requirements undermine the morale and rights of public servants on the front lines of this crisis.

No Suspension of Worker Protection Laws for Private and Public Sector Workers

Now more than ever, workers need the full protections of Labor, collective bargaining, and health and safety laws. The state should protect public sector collective bargaining and not allow employers to use this crisis to weaken worker rights and protections. Maintaining essential services should not mean an abandonment of reasonable worker protections and engagement through the collective bargaining process. A crisis is not an excuse to suspend important worker protections that are critical to preventing injuries, wage theft, or exploitation by employers. Staffing ratios, scope of practice, meal and rest breaks, overtime, job protected leave, public sector bargaining laws, and other protections are critical to ensure that workers can continue to do their jobs efficiently and safely. In addition, hourly school employees should be paid while staying home like every other school employee per Executive Order N-26-20 of March 13, 2020.

Health Care Coverage for COVID-19

The cost of health care should not be an obstacle for ECI workers to get tested and treated for COVID-19. During the crisis, the state should provide free testing to all ECI workers, as available. The state should also mandate that health plans and insurers waive co-pays and deductibles for all COVID-19 related treatment for ECI workers, not just for testing and screening. We also urge the state to prohibit doctors, hospitals, and licensed laboratories from sending surprise medical bills to patients with COVID-19 or who go to the emergency room with COVID-19 symptoms.

As the economic crisis increases layoffs, workers will lose job-based coverage. The state should require employers to maintain benefits for workers who lose coverage because of layoffs, or hour reductions due to the public health emergency. COVID-19 treatment costs are already driving up premiums and estimates are for increases up to 40%. We urge the state to mandate a premium rate freeze for all fully-insured plans sold in the individual, small, and large group market for the duration of the crisis. This will allow consumers, employers, and workers to maintain coverage while under stay-at-home orders. We urge the state to ensure that Medi-Cal and Covered California call centers are adequately staffed with eligibility workers that also get the appropriate

PPE and protections for their health and safety. We also urge Covered California to market to both employers and workers about the availability of coverage and subsidies, including Medi-Cal. EDD should refer all applicants for UI and SDI to Medi-Cal and Covered California.

Provide Free or Subsidized Child and Elder Care for Health Care and ECI Workers

ECI workers go to work to provide the health care and other services Californians need to get through this crisis. With schools closed for an indefinite time and concern on the rise for elders, ECI workers need child and elder care so they can get to work. The state should create an emergency fund to provide free and or subsidized child and elder care to ensure that workers can take all the shifts necessary without worrying about how to care for dependents. More specifically, the state should implement strategies to connect health care workers needing child care to family child care providers who have the capacity, experience, and are the only child care professionals operating during this crisis. The state should also consider allowing ECI workers to designate a person for Paid Family Leave (PFL) in order to care for a child. Provide an inclusive definition of family, so that workers can care for seriously ill grandparents, grandchildren, adult children, parents-in-law, and siblings. A shortage of health care workers will only make this crisis more acute and it is imperative that the state eliminate all obstacles to keeping health care workers on the job.

Ensure State Leasing/Commandeering of Hotels Protects Workers' Rights

Pursuant to the Governor's Executive Order N-25-20, the Office of Emergency Services has been working to secure hotels for use as temporary housing for the homeless, quarantine facilities for COVID-19 patients, and other potential uses related to the crisis. While this allows hospitality workers to keep their jobs, it puts them on the frontlines of the pandemic and changes the nature of their work. We urge the state to ensure that hospitality workers' rights are protected in these situations. These include the right to work where it is possible to do so safely, maintenance of health care benefits in the event of layoffs, recall rights when the crisis is over, and worker participation in the bid process to ensure these rights are respected. This is an opportunity to protect public health and to prevent job loss in the hospitality industry – but it is critical that workers are protected.

Safe Housing for the Immunocompromised and the Elderly Who Live with ECI Workers Serving the Public

Health care workers, firefighters, EMS and rescue personnel, front line law enforcement officers, and other ECI are being exposed to this virus every day when they care for patients or serve the public and the risk is increased by a lack of PPE. When workers return home, they should not be worried about exposing anyone in their household who is immunocompromised or elderly. This vulnerable population should have access to safe housing so they can remain protected, while our workers continue to care for California's COVID-19 patients, without exposing and endangering their family.

Statewide Moratorium on Evictions, Foreclosures, and Utility Shutoffs

Millions of workers are having their hours cut or losing their jobs due to the COVID-19 crisis response. Many workers already live paycheck-to-paycheck and do not have the savings to buy food, let alone pay rent, mortgages, and bills. The Great Recession showed what happens when millions of people lose their homes and jobs and mass foreclosures empty out entire communities. To avoid that, the state should enact an emergency moratorium on all evictions for renters and small businesses for at least the next 60 days or for the duration of this crisis. This should also apply to foreclosures and any pending shutoff of utilities, such as electricity, water, or phone services.

We thank you for your quick response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We look forward to working with you to protect and support workers in all industries during this crisis and to rebuild the economy and state budget as the state recovers.

Sincerely,

Art Pulaski

Executive Secretary Treasurer

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OPEIU 29 AFL CIO

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