Governor Parson has signed the State Budget for this year which includes several funding increases for Education. The budget adds $214.5 million to fully fund K-12 pupil transportation. With the additional transportation funding for local school districts, they will be able to move more money into supporting our teachers and students.

The budget also adds $21.7 million to increase teacher pay. This money will be used to provide matching funds for struggling school districts to increase starting pay to $38,000 and adds $37 million to bring back the Career Ladder program.

Higher education will receive an increase of $3.5 million for Bright Flight, $4.5 million to Access Missouri, $6 million for A+ Schools and $7 million for a revised Dual Credit scholarship program for low-income students. The budget also includes significant increases for maintenance and repair funding for all community colleges, four-year institutions and the state technical colleges.

The Omnibus education bill included several provisions regarding reading intervention and establishes several new programs to help identify struggling students and provides training to teachers in supporting those students. The following bills are included in the Omnibus package.

**HB 2366** requires all school districts to establish gifted programs if 3%or more of the students are identified as gifted.

**HB 2304** provides a new four-year certification for individuals that want to substitute teach. To be clear, the certificate would last for four years. The State Board of Education will issue certificates with a background check and sponsorship by a public school district. Applicants for certification must also have completed at least 36 semester hours at an accredited institution of higher education or have completed a 20-hour online training program and have a high school diploma or its equivalent. Certificates will expire if the individual fails to substitute teach for at least five (5) days or forty (40) hours of in-seat instruction in a calendar year. The amendment also requires DESE to develop an online substitute training program with 20 hours of training related to subjects appropriate for substitute teaching. This also allows retired teachers that have a substitute certificate to substitute and not have those hours and salary affect their retirement allowance. This wavier is only good until June 30, 2025.

 **HB 2202** requires public schools in all school years after July 1, 2023, to offer at least one computer science course in high school in either an in-person setting or virtual option. The course offered must:

1. Be of high quality as defined by the state board of education.
2. Meet or exceed the computer science performance standards developed and adopted by DESE.
3. Be offered in such school’s course catalog.

 **HB 1973** allows school districts to use motor vehicles, other than school buses, for the purpose of transporting school children. The bill essentially permits school districts to create ridesharing agreements to transport students to and from school. This program is purely voluntary.