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BIC Urges Justice to Approve Major Education Reform Bill

CHARLESTON, WV – West Virginia’s public education system will get a major overhaul following passage of comprehensive reform legislation, and the state’s business community could not be more pleased.

“The legislation that passed Monday night is an incredibly positive step forward for our struggling public education system. Our legislative leadership should be given high praise for achieving such a positive compromise,” BIC Chairman Chris Hamilton said. “House Bill 206 provides important pay raises and other financial incentives for our teachers – who will have received more than 10% in pay raises in just two years. The bill also gives local boards of education a lot more control over their schools, and it opens the door to exciting school choice options like public charter schools.”

Hamilton said the public discourse on education reform may have focused on charter schools, but that is a minor component of HB206.

“I hope the general public understands that charter schools are successful all over the country, in all our neighboring states and Washington, D.C. Let’s move on from that,” he said. “We should focus on making the highest and best use of all the new control that local school boards will be getting because of HB206. The West Virginia Business & Industry Council is asking Gov. Jim Justice to sign this legislation so implementation can begin as soon as possible.”

In addition to the second 5% teacher pay raise in two years, the omnibus education bill gives counties additional funding plus freedom from state regulations, increased school choice options and additional salary steps to math teachers. The bill also will allow counties to pay more to teachers in high-need subjects or rural areas of the state, and it allocates \$24 million to provide more access to mental health professionals in schools.

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