



Week of January 15, 2018

Winter weather affected the Capitol City in the same way it affected much of the state this week with many schools and state departments closing, but the legislature continued with meetings as planned.

The sole piece of legislation discussed on the House floor this week was [House Bill 957](#), which aims to overhaul the current MAEP education funding formula and replace it with the Mississippi Uniform Per Student Funding Formula. The bill, based on a series of recommendations from the consulting group EdBuild, would base school funding on student enrollment rather than teacher units. It sets the base student cost at \$4,800 per student with additional weights added for students with individual needs, such as special education, gifted, low income and English language learners.

Supporters of the bill say it provides an easier way to predict how much funding a school will receive and ensures fairness across school districts. They also say it will gradually increase the overall investment in education by an estimated \$107 million once the formula is fully established. Opponents of the bill expressed concerns about how the state would be able to finance the new formula. Some questioned why the bill made no provisions to recalculate for future inflation, and some said poor and rural districts would be adversely affected by the bill's wording. In total, 17 amendments were offered to make adjustments to different aspects of the bill and all were voted down. Two amendments were adopted to resolve technical errors.

After a floor debate that spanned four hours, the bill passed by a vote of 66 to 54. The bill will continue to face possible changes as it goes to the Senate for a vote and, if amended by the Senate, to conference, where both House and Senate members will meet to finalize the proposal. Assuming the bill is signed by the Governor, it still involves a five-year "phase-in," which would not begin until 2020.

Visitors at the Capitol this week included the Mississippi Primary Health Care Association, the Mississippi Economic Council and supporters of Autism Awareness Day.