

State Legislative Update

Board of Regents
March 13, 2025

Montana University System

Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education

State Legislative Developments

Top 3 Priorities

HB 2 General Appropriations Act

HB 5 & 10 Long-range building & IT

HB 13 State Employee Pay Plan

HB 2

*Changes from the Executive Budget
Adopted by Section E Subcommittee*

Removed: Online Hybrid JD Program at UM: **\$1M** for biennium OTO

Added:

- **One-Two-Free** MUS continued: **\$2.95M** for biennium/ongoing
- **One-Two-Free** extended to Community Colleges: **\$1.2M** for biennium/ongoing
- **One-Two-Free** extended to Tribal Colleges: **\$200,000** for biennium/ongoing
- **Montana 10:** **\$7M** for biennium/ongoing
- Native American Graves Repatriation Act (**NAGPRA**) assistance, UM: **\$735,330** for biennium/OTO
- **Nonnative Beneficiary** Payment increase to Tribal Colleges: **\$550,480** for biennium/ongoing
- **Graduate Medical Education** increase: **\$266,161 FY 26; \$436,385 FY 27**

HB 5

MUS Capital Projects: **\$49.7M LRBP Cash; \$16.3M Authority-only**

MUS Deferred Maintenance: **\$23.4M**

MUS Authority-only: **\$69.4M**

HB 10

Just over \$5M appropriated for:

- CyberMontana (Security Operations Center, Workforce Training Programs, Cyber Policy Clinic)
- Security Information and Event Management (SIEM); and
- Enterprise Resource Planning and System Replacement (a combined appropriation for Miles Community College, Dawson Community College, and Flathead Valley Community College)

HB 13

- Increase the base pay of each employee by \$1 an hour or by 2.5%, whichever is greater, each year of the 2027 biennium;
- Provide for travel reimbursement at 70% of the standard federal reimbursement rate; and
- Increase employer contribution benefits by \$26 a month the first year of the biennium and \$27 the second year.

Status of Policy Bills

OCHE is Tracking

- Priority system and assignment
- Day 48 Status

Bill No.	Short Title	Description	Status at Transmittal
HB 2	General appropriations act	Appropriates state agency funding for the 2027 Biennium.	(H) Appropriations; Hearings 3/19-3/21
HB 5	Long-range building appropriations	Appropriates funding and grants authority for capital projects and maintenance.	(H) Appropriations; Hearing 3/17
HB 7	Reclamation and development grants	An appropriation is included for Montana Technological University Phytomining Remediation and Minerals Recovery Demonstration.	(S) Referred to Finance & Claims; Hearing not yet scheduled
HB 10	Long-range information technology	Appropriates funding for state IT projects	(H) Appropriations; Passed as amended, 21-2
HB 13	State employee pay plan	Implements negotiated pay plan for state employees.	(S) Finance and Claims; Concurred as amended, 14-8
HB 47	Revise state building energy conservation program	Removes the DEQ's authority to issue bonds in alignment with Legislative and Executive direction to reduce bond liability exposure. A partner bill, HB 217, transfers the SBECPP (State Building Energy Conservation Program) from DEQ to State AE (DOA). Streamlines program's administration as State AE is responsible for planning, design, construction of state facilities.	(S) State Administration; Hearing held 2/4; No action taken
HB 113	Revise resident preferences for public contracts and contract term limits	Requires Department of Administration to determine the residency of contractors who bid on	(H) State Administration; Tabled; Failed to meet Transmittal deadline

Bill No.	Short Title	Description	Status at Transmittal
		public contracts for construction, repair, and public works or public contracts for the purchase of goods.	
HB 121	Provide privacy in certain restrooms, changing rooms, and sleeping quarters	Requires "covered entities" to "designate each multi-occupancy restroom, changing room, or sleeping quarters for the exclusive use of females or males." In the bill, a covered entity is a correctional center, a juvenile detention facility, a local domestic violence program, a public building, or a public school. The bill provides that a person may bring a private cause of action against a covered entity that has not complied with the requirements if the person encounters another individual of the opposite sex in the restroom or changing room.	(H) Returned from Enrolling
HB 153	Revise laws related to school funding interim commission	The commission conducting the decennial study will include representation from the Board of Regents and create as part of the study an "innovation and excellence in education working group to develop recommendations, objectives, and an implementation plan ... to improve the basic system of free, quality, public elementary and secondary schools."	(S) Referred to Senate Education and Cultural Resources; Hearing not yet scheduled
HB 163	Provide health care preceptor individual income tax credit	Allows for an income tax credit for a taxpayer who serves as a preceptor of a student enrolled in an eligible health care training program with an income tax credit.	(H) Taxation; Tabled

Bill No.	Short Title	Description	Status at Transmittal
HB 252	Create the student and teacher advancement for results and success act (STARS)	Revises K-12 school funding laws.	(S) Referred to Senate Education and Cultural Resources; Hearing not yet scheduled
HB 284	Establish an interim committee to investigate civil rights violations and censorship within the MUS	Creates an interim committee to “investigate civil rights violations and acts of censorship committed by the Montana University System.” The committee would “gather testimony on the record from Montana students on any civil rights violations or acts of censorship that the students have experienced or witnessed at Montana public universities and colleges and make findings and recommendations for state and federal officials.”	(S) Referred to Senate Judiciary; Hearing not yet scheduled
HB 300	Generally revise laws related to discrimination in education	Makes it an unlawful discriminatory practice "for an educational institution to allow a male person to participate in athletic programs designated for female persons” and for an educational institution to “fail to provide a person with access to a restroom, locker room, shower area, or sleeping quarter that is inaccessible by a person of the opposite sex while in use.”	(S) Judiciary; Bill Concurred; 2 nd Reading not yet scheduled
HB 336	Provide for apprenticeship programs for certain license types	Requires certain professional boards to grant a license to a person who completes a nationally recognized apprenticeship.	(S) Referred to Senate Business and Labor; Hearing not yet scheduled

Bill No.	Short Title	Description	Status at Transmittal
HB 400	Enact the "Free to Speak Act"	<p>Applies to all public school students and staff, including those at postsecondary institutions. Provides that a student or employee may not be disciplined, and the state may not take an adverse action against a student or employee for declining to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify a person's pronouns; or • address a person by using a name other than the person's legal name or a derivative of the person's legal name or by using a pronoun or a title that is inconsistent with the person's sex. 	(S) Referred to Senate Judiciary; Hearing not yet scheduled
HB 499	Extend the grow your own grant program	<p>Extends the Grow Your Own grant program administered by OCHE another two years, moving the program's termination date from 2027 to 2029, as well as provides that postsecondary institutions are eligible for grants. A \$500,000 appropriation from the general fund to OCHE is attached to this proposal, with the intention that the amount be considered part of the ongoing OCHE base budget.</p>	(H) First Reading; Not yet assigned to committee
HB 553	Generally revise military higher education act	<p>Requires faculty of an institution of higher education under the jurisdiction of the BOR to give a student who is a member of a reserve component of the U.S. Armed Forces or the Montana National Guard at least 15 business days to make up a missed assignment,</p>	(H) 3 rd Reading Passed; Transmitted to Senate

Bill No.	Short Title	Description	Status at Transmittal
		<p>exam, midterm, or final if the student misses the work because of inactive duty training or annual training.</p> <p>Requires the student to provide notice to the faculty prior to the absence.</p>	
HB 618	Provide for a Montana individual freedom act	Proposes new law to prohibit “state and local government agencies ... from expending funds for memberships, goods, or services from organizations that discriminate and from expending funds on diversity, equity, and inclusion or on political or social activism.” The attorney general is tasked with review and approval of certain programs and activities.	(H) State Administration; Tabled; Failed to meet Transmittal deadline
HB 631	Revise student online protection laws related to postsecondary opportunities	Provides that the term “K-12 school purposes” in the Montana Pupil Online Personal Information Protection Act does not include courses that are provided for the purpose of postsecondary credit or work-based learning courses provided by a work-based learning partner.	(H) 3 rd Reading Passed; Transmitted to Senate
HB 635	Revise human rights laws to prohibit diversity, equity, and inclusion programs	<p>Prohibits a state or local government agency from spending public funds on a DEI program or employing an individual whose duties include creating or operating a DEI program.</p> <p>Defines DEI, divisive concepts, race or sex scapegoating, and race or sex stereotyping and provides investigative</p>	(H) 3 rd Reading Failed; Failed to meet Transmittal deadline

Bill No.	Short Title	Description	Status at Transmittal
		authority to the attorney general. The bill includes a right of private action and penalties.	
HB 638	Revise human rights laws	Prohibits a state or local government agency from requesting, soliciting, or compelling a person to provide a diversity statement; prohibits state or local government agency from granting any form of preferential consideration or treatment to a person who, with or without solicitation from the state or local government agency, provides a diversity statement.	(H) 3 rd Reading passed; Transmitted to Senate
HB 663	Revise education laws related to diversity, equity, and inclusion	<p>Prohibits consideration of race, color, ethnicity, or national origin by institutions of higher education in hiring, admissions, participation, benefits, scholarships, and financial aid. It creates a private cause of action and compensatory damages, punitive damages, statutory damages, and injunctive and declaratory relief.</p> <p>An adopted amendment strikes language that would have prohibited an institution from revealing to admissions or financial aid officers data concerning the race, color, national origin, or ethnicity of any applicant or student before admissions and financial aid, scholarship, and funding decisions are made.</p>	(H) 3 rd Reading Passed; Transmitted to Senate

Bill No.	Short Title	Description	Status at Transmittal
HB 718	Generally revise laws relating to incarceration	Establishes Office of Re-entry Services in Department of Labor to create a collaborative effort among state agencies to coordinate supportive services for individuals exiting or preparing to exit incarceration and reenter communities in Montana, including skilled-trade and apprenticeship programs; job placement; workforce and supportive services, including career education; the availability of and access to online certificate training programs; and the availability of and access to general or secondary education programs.	(H) 3 rd Reading Passed; Transmitted to Senate
HB 771	Revise university system laws to remove barriers to freshmen living off campus	Prohibits university or college facility from requiring a student to live in an on-campus housing facility as a condition of enrollment or attendance at any unit of the MUS if the student lives with an immediate family member at the family member's principal residence.	(H) Education; Tabled; Failed to meet Transmittal deadline
HB 823	Revise laws relating to the state plan committee	Requires the Commissioner of Higher Education and the Superintendent of Public Instruction to update the state plan for career and technical education as required by the Perkins grant.	(H) 3 rd Reading Passed; Transmitted to Senate
SB 33	State buildings subject to building code review	Transfers authority and responsibility for plan review, permitting, inspection, and building code enforcement for public buildings owned or operated by	(H) House State Administration hearing held; No action yet taken

Bill No.	Short Title	Description	Status at Transmittal
		state agencies to the Department of Labor and Industry	
SB 44	Generally revise laws regarding separation of powers doctrine	Revises and codifies laws regarding the separation of powers doctrine and defines in the Montana Code Annotated the powers of the Executive Branch, the Legislative Branch, the Judicial Branch, the Board of Regents, and the Board of Public Education.	(S) 3 rd Reading Failed; Indefinitely Postponed; Failed to meet Transmittal deadline
SB 210	Revise board of regents laws to remove statutory requirement for student regent	Strikes language requiring a student regent on the Board of Regents.	(S) Senate Cultural Resource Committee; Tabled; Failed to meet Transmittal deadline
SB 216	Creating the Montana physicians' workforce investment act	Creates a grant program in Department of Labor and Industry to support graduate medical education in Montana.	(S) Finance & Claims; Tabled
SB 271	Remove prohibition on certain compensation for collegiate student-athlete's name/image/likeness	Removes the prohibition on a postsecondary institution or athletic association, conference, or organization with authority over intercollegiate sports from providing a prospective or current student athlete compensation for use of the athlete's name, image, or likeness.	(H) First Reading; Not yet assigned to House committee
SB 320	Create Montana-Ireland trade commission	Includes the Commissioner of Higher Education or a designee on the trade commission.	(S) Sent to Enrolling
SB 331	Require state buildings to have automatic fire	Requires all state buildings have automatic fire sprinkler or fire suppression systems installed.	(S) Public Health, Welfare and Safety; Tabled

Bill No.	Short Title	Description	Status at Transmittal
	sprinklers or suppression systems		
SB 474	Require acceptance of religious and personal medical exemptions to required immunizations	Provides that a person enrolled or seeking to enroll in school may attend the school without obtaining required immunizations if the person files with the governing authority a signed statement, letter, or notarized affidavit on a form stating that immunization is contrary to religious tenets and practices of the signer.	(S) Transmitted to House; Not yet assigned to committee
SB 476	Defining separation of powers	Defines powers of the Executive Branch, the Judicial Branch, and the Legislative Branch as those enumerated by the Constitution and granted by law. Specifies that Executive Branch power includes authority of the Board of Regents and the Board of Public Education to perform duties provided by law.	(S) 3 rd Reading Failed; Indefinitely Postponed; Failed to meet Transmittal deadline
SB 478	Require higher education institutions to pay medical costs associated with mandated COVID-19 vaccinations	Requires institutions of higher education to pay medical costs related to required Covid-19 vaccinations.	(S) Education and Cultural Resources; Tabled; Failed to meet Transmittal deadline
SB 482	Revise contract laws relating to student athletes	Requires a written contract relating to student athletes' NIL.	(S) Transmitted to House; Not yet assigned to committee
SJ 7	Joint resolution to support shooting competition as a collegiate sport	Resolves that the Montana Legislature encourages the units of the Montana University System to utilize university resources and to partner with	(S) Filed with Secretary of State; Returned from Enrolling

Bill No.	Short Title	Description	Status at Transmittal
		nonuniversity personnel and entities to facilitate shooting sports competitions as collegiate sports and to develop endowments and offer scholarships for enrolled students competing in shooting sports.	