

Weekly Legislative Update: **Education**

Issue Team Chair: Catherine Ahl

Contact: cahl@lwwwa.org or 360-697-7924

February 27, 2022

By the time you receive this Newsletter, the Senate & House Operating Budgets may have passed their respective houses, and negotiations behind the scenes have begun. Bills have to pass fiscal committees by Feb. 28, and then action will be on the Senate and House floors.

Bills Needing Action This Week

HB 1630 Makes it unlawful to carry a firearm onto facilities being used for official meetings of a school board, other governmental public meetings, and election facilities. A substitute bill, including the issues addressed in HB 1618 regarding elections facilities, was passed by the House Civil Rights & Judiciary Committee and by the House 57-41. There were 8 amendments and debate on those and on the bill took 3 hours. The Senate Law & Justice Committee passed the bill to the Rules Committee.

⚠ Please contact your Senator and ask for support to move HB 1630 out of Rules and to vote a strong YES on the Senate floor.

Please read under Bills We Support to see the latest status of other bills.

Bills We Support

HB 1664 Increases prototypical school formulas for physical, social, and emotional support in schools by increasing the number of school nurses. A substitute bill was passed by the House Education Committee and the Appropriations Committee. It passed the House 73-23, was referred to the Senate Ways & Means Committee, which has scheduled an executive session on Monday, Feb. 28. I feel confident it will pass as funding is included in both the Senate & House budgets.

HB 1153 Increasing language access in public schools. Requires all public school districts to have a language access program that includes spoken language and sign language interpreters working in public schools, to interpret for students' families, students, and communities in educational settings outside the classroom. Passed the House 83-13, and the Senate Ways & Means Committee has scheduled an executive session on Monday, Feb. 28.

[HB 1723](#) Closes the digital equity divide by increasing the accessibility and affordability of telecommunication services, devices, and training. It was passed by the House 68 -30 and is now scheduled for an executive session in the Senate Ways & Means Committee on Monday, Feb. 28 .

[HB 1590](#) Enrollment stabilization funding for local schools to address enrollment declines due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Passed House 77-18, and the Senate Ways & Means Committee has an executive session scheduled on Monday, Feb. 28.

[SB 5497](#) Extends voting authority to student members on the state board of education. The Senate Early Learning & K-12 Committee passed a substitute, which passed the Senate 28-21, was passed by the House Education Committee and is now in the Rules Committee.

[SB 5933](#) Establishing a school seismic safety grant program. Establishes a school seismic safety grant program for remediation of seismic or tsunami hazards in qualifying school buildings. This bill passed the Senate 49-0 and is part of the proposed Senate Operations and Capital Budgets which provide funding to implement the School Seismic Safety Grant Program under Substitute Senate Bill (SSB) 5933 and for completing the 2019-21 seismic retrofit program. The bill has an executive session scheduled in the House Capital Budget Committee on Feb. 28.

[HB 1611](#) Advancing equity in programs for highly capable students. Universal screening is required to increase the participation of students who are traditionally underrepresented in the highly capable program. This bill passed the House 96-0, and the Senate Early Learning & K-12 Education Committee passed it on to the Rules Committee

[SB 5563](#) Enrollment stabilization funding for local schools to address enrollment declines due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It passed the Senate Early Learning & K-12 Committee and the Ways & Means Committee, which sent it to the Rules Committee but was never passed by the Senate. Since a similar bill, HB 1590, passed the House, it may be the one that passes the Senate.

[SB 5595](#) Increases prototypical school formulas for physical, social, and emotional support staff, plus additional increases of the number of school nurses. A substitute bill was passed by the Senate Early Learning & K-12 Committee, which provides that appropriations may only be spent on salaries and benefits for support staff. The Ways & Means Committee passed it to the Rules Committee but was never passed by the Senate. Since a similar bill, HB 1664, passed the House, it may be the one that passes the Senate.

[SB 5568](#) Concerning preemption of municipal laws restricting the open carry of weapons. Provides that cities, towns, counties, and other municipalities may enact laws and ordinances restricting the open carry of firearms or other weapons at any public meeting; any building or facility owned or operated by a city, town, county, or other municipality; or any permitted demonstration within their respective jurisdictions. This allows jurisdictions to prohibit open

carry rather than outlaws them across the state as does HB 1630. The Senate Law & Justice Committee passed a substitute on Jan. 27 and sent it to the Rules Committee, but it never received a vote in the Senate.

[SB 5581](#) Addressing pupil transportation allocations. Requires 100 percent reimbursement of school district costs for transporting qualifying students with disabilities, who are homeless, and in foster care. Passed the Senate 49-0 and was referred to the House Appropriations Committee, but no hearing has been scheduled.

[SB 5537](#) Changes compulsory school attendance to include children five, six, and seven years of age. Washington is the only state that requires school attendance beginning with children who are eight years of age. LWVWA has supported this change for many years. The Senate Early Learning & K-12 Committee passed a substitute, which just includes six and seven years old, on Jan. 28 and sent it to the Ways & Means Committee, which never held a vote.

[SB 5630](#) Expands the program of basic education to include early learning. Early learning would be phased in for three and four year-olds starting in the 2026-27 school year and making it an entitlement by the 2029-30 school year. LWVWA has had a position that basic education should include birth to five years. This is a start, but it never received a hearing.

Bills we're Watching

[HJR 4200](#) Amending the Constitution to allow a simple majority of voters voting to authorize school district bonds. LWVWA has no position on school bonds, only levies, but I know a lot of our members are interested in this issue. The House Education Committee passed the resolution to the Capital Budget Committee, which didn't hold a vote.

Bills We Oppose

[HB 1591](#) Provides access to local enrichment funding for charter schools. Funding for school districts is provided through levies approved by the voters, which doesn't include extra state funding for charter schools. It is in the House Appropriations Committee but not scheduled for a hearing. It still could slip into the House budget as was done last year before it was taken out during negotiations with the Senate.

How You Can Be Involved

- During the legislative session we will send Action Alerts in the [Legislative Newsletter](#). Please respond to these, which will direct you to an application to facilitate

communicating with your legislators on an important vote in committees or on the chamber floor.

- Local Leagues in Washington have action chairs who coordinate action teams. Some local Leagues have education teams to take action locally. Contact your local League action chair to find out and join.
- You may also express your opinion on legislation with the LWVWA issue chairs. We will take your perspectives under considerations as we determine our support for legislation and prepare testimony. Catherine Ahl, Education Issue Chair, cahl@lwvwa.org, 360-697-7924