

## Weekly Legislative Update: **Education**

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The information in this update is what we had when submitted. Things could change in the next few days. Bills have to pass their house of origin by Feb. 15.

### **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 is now on the House floor calendar.

⚠ Please contact your two Representatives and ask that they vote for this bill.

**[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 Community & Economic Development Committee, and a substitute was passed by the Appropriations Committee. It is now on the floor calendar.

⚠ Please contact your two Representatives and ask that they vote for this bill.

**[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 has a hearing in the Senate Early Learning & K-12 Education on Feb. 16 at 10:30 am.

⚠ Please sign in Pro here: <https://app.leg.wa.gov/csi/Senate#>

**Please read under Bills We Support to see the latest status of other bills, including three new 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 and goes on to the Senate Early Learning & K-12 Education Committee.

**[HB 1590](#) Enrollment stabilization funding for local schools to address enrollment declines due to the COVID-19 pandemic.** Passed House 77-18 and probably on to the Senate Ways & Means Committee.

**[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 and now goes on to the House Education 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.

**[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 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. Since a similar bill, HB 1664, passed the House, it may be the one that finally passes the Senate.

**[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.

**[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, but this may be the compromise that can pass both houses. The Senate Law & Justice Committee passed a substitute on Jan. 27 and sent it to the Rules Committee.

**[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 goes to the House Education 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 probably will be sent to the House Appropriations Committee.

**[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 was referred to the Senate Early Learning & K-12 Education Committee.

## 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.

**[HB 1807](#) Addressing the protection of quality civic education and academic discourse.** Mandates what can be taught and discussed in civics classes. LWVWA testified against this bill.

## 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@lwwa.org](mailto:cahl@lwwa.org), 360-697-7924