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## *Legislative Update Week 2*

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The second week of legislative session included several important issues. The Senate Education Subcommittee held another hearing on [S.935](#), the Education Savings Account Voucher bill, the Governor gave the State of the State, and [S.946](#), a bill for unencumbered time was placed on the schedule for the upcoming full Senate Education Committee meeting this coming week. Read below for more details and ways to take action!

# Voucher Fight Continues and Unencumbered Time Advances

**Cheers** - Eight Republican Senators—[Talley](#) (Spartanburg)\*, [Shealy](#) (Lexington), [Young](#) (Aiken), [Senn](#) (Charleston), [Martin](#) (Spartanburg), [Johnson](#) (York), [Alexander](#) (Oconee), and [Cromer](#) (Newberry)—are **not** sponsors of the harmful voucher bill [S.935](#). If one of these Senators is your state Senator, click on their name to send an email thanking them for not sponsoring S.935 and urging them not to support the bill. \*Note that Senator Talley is on the Education Subcommittee considering [S.935](#). (Not sure who your Senator is? [Use this link!](#))

On Wednesday at 10 a.m., the [Full Senate Education Committee](#) will consider [S.946](#), a bill introduced by [Senator Goldfinch](#) (R, Georgetown) for unencumbered time for teachers. The SCEA has played a critical role in advocating for this legislation to be introduced, and Unencumbered Time is a key part of [our Legislative Agenda](#).

While the full committee does not allow for public testimony, the committee does accept and consider written remarks, [You can send remarks supporting S.946 by email by clicking this link](#). (Be sure to include the bill number.)

**Jeers** - Twenty-one out of 29 Republican Senators are sponsoring [S.935](#) Education Scholarship Account Vouchers. In addition, Senator [Jackson](#) (D, Richland), a member of the Senate Education Subcommittee considering [S.935](#), made remarks in subcommittee on Wednesday indicating potential support of this harmful legislation.

If [Jackson](#) (Richland) or one of these 21 Republican Senators is your state Senator, click on

their name below to send an email to let them know you are disappointed in their support for **S.935**, a bill that harms public schools. (Not sure who your Senator is? [Use this link!](#))

[Grooms](#) (Berkeley), [Loftis](#) (Greenville), [Goldfinch](#) (Georgetown), [Verdin](#) (Laurens), [Rice](#) (Pickens)\*, [Cash](#) (Anderson), [Adams](#) (Berkeley), [Gustafson](#) (Kershaw), [Climer](#) (York), [Peeler](#) (Cherokee), [Garrett](#) (McCormick), [Kimbrell](#) (Spartanburg), [Davis](#) (Beaufort), [Campsen](#) (Charleston), [Hembree](#) (Horry), [Turner](#) (Greenville), [Corbin](#) (Greenville), [Bennett](#) (Dorchester), [Massey](#) (Edgefield)\*, [Gambrell](#) (Anderson), and [Rankin](#) (Horry), and [Jackson](#) (D, Richland)\*

\*Note that Senators including **Senators** [Rice](#) (R, Pickens), [Massey](#) (R, Edgefield), and [Jackson](#) (D, Richland) are on the Education Subcommittee considering **S.935**.



**Above:** The SCEA member Rona Neely testifies against S.935 on Wednesday. [Click here to watch a portion of her powerful testimony.](#)

During the second round of public testimony on **S.935** the majority of speakers once again resoundingly urged members of the Senate Education Subcommittee to vote no on **S.935**, including The SCEA member Rona Neely. In fact, some members who came to testify were not able to testify due to the number of speakers and limited time. **The Subcommittee, however, carried over the discussion to this coming Thursday at 10:00 a.m.** Members wishing to speak to oppose **S.935** will have another opportunity to make the collective voice of educators heard.

Testimony is not the only way to make your voice heard on this important issue.

**You can help** get the word out about this harmful legislation and the severe consequences it could have for public schools by [sharing on social media](#) and, most importantly, [writing to the](#)

[members of the Senate Education Subcommittee now.](#)

**Click below to send your email to all five Senators on the Subcommittee!**

Email the Senate Education Subcommittee Now!

## State of the State and Rebuttal

**State of the State:** The dollars that legislators have to decide how to allocate were discussed in the [Governor's State of the State address](#) on Wednesday, in which he presented his 2022-23 [Executive Budget](#).

Most notable to public education advocates are the education funding proposals he described, including \$20 million for the funding of dangerous "education savings account" vouchers, a highly inadequate proposal to raise educator starting salary to \$38,000, and a mostly flawed proposal for updating the education funding formula that includes language about "accountability" and changes how \$3.2 billion in funding is distributed but does nothing to address biggest driver of education funding inequities.

Education is not the only sector facing privatization threats in the governor's proposals. The governor also mentioned an [executive order](#) to review mental health counseling services delivered to our schools and explore private sector alternatives. He went further calling on the General Assembly to evaluate whether the state should privatize behavioral health services currently provided by the Department of Mental Health.

While the Governor's proposal has no legislative effect, it signals to legislators what his priorities are and the initiatives he supports.

**Rebuttal:** Freshman South Carolina Representative Spencer Wetmore of Charleston delivered the [Democratic response](#) to Gov. Henry McMaster's State of the State.

Much of Rep. Wetmore's response called on fellow legislators to end political divisiveness and focus on bipartisanship to improve the lives of working families in South Carolina.

While not proposing a specific dollar or percentage increase, Rep. Wetmore advocated for raises for South Carolina educators and urged respect for the education profession.

Most notably, Rep. Wetmore pushed back on the Republican effort to use public dollars to fund private school vouchers through bills like **S.935** "You can't fix schools by defunding them, and we must reject this latest voucher bill," Wetmore said. "It takes money out of our public school system to fund private academies. I have no objection to private schools, but public money should be spent on public schools."

***Have thoughts on the State of the State or the Rebuttal? [Share them with The SCEA President Sherry East by clicking here!](#)***

# PLEDGE TO BE AN EDUCATION VOTER

Do you believe every South Carolina student deserves a great public school? [Take the Education Voter Pledge!](#)

Make sure your state Senator & Representative know that Public Education issues will have most impact your decision as a voter. [Take the pledge now!](#)

## The Week Ahead

[Click here for a look at the meetings scheduled for next week](#) on bills of interest to education.

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