
To view this email as a web page, go [here](#).



Legislative Update Week 15
April 22nd, 2023



Things To Know from This Week

The State Budget

The Senate passed their version of the state budget this week and the budget will now be returned to the House for approval.

Senators agreed with the House plan to raise every cell in the state's base teacher salary schedule by \$2,500, which brings the starting salary from \$40,000 to \$42,500. The chamber is working to raise the starting salary to \$50,000 by 2026.

The Senate version of the budget also sends \$261 million more in classroom aid to school districts, which the districts could then use to give raises to teachers, if they are already above the minimums set by the state.

The budget now heads to conference committee, where the differences in the House version and the Senate version will be ironed out. Once they can agree on a budget, it will head to the Governor for signature.

Censorship

The [Senate Education Committee](#) passed [H.3728](#), (Transparency and Integrity in Education Act) favorably as amended on Wednesday.

This censorship bill could limit discussions of race, gender, and other important issues in K-12 and higher education classrooms. It could also make it difficult for educators to accurately teach their subject areas and restrict their ability to respect, reflect, and protect all students. The current version of the bill prohibits parents from suing a school district for alleged teaching violations.

During committee discussion, lawmakers from both parties stressed they want students to get a full and accurate picture when covering slavery, Jim Crow segregation laws and the Holocaust.

Supporters claim the purpose of the bill is to encourage transparent and factual school lessons on complex history; however, this bill is part of a national agenda to inject political censorship into classrooms, and we have seen how the real-world impacts of this kind of legislation have played out in other states.

The bill now advances to the Senate floor for debate.

The SCEA is encouraging members to make phone calls to their senators in opposition to this bill. Members can also use the link below to send a customizable message.

CLICK HERE TO TAKE ACTION AGAINST CENSORSHIP!

Paid Family Leave for School District Employees

The Senate Finance K-12 Education subcommittee favorably reported [H.3908](#) (Paid Family Leave for School District Employees) from committee. It will now move to the full Finance Committee for consideration.

[Representative Neal A. Collins](#) introduced this bill, which would “provide paid parental leave upon the birth of a child or initial legal placement of a foster child for eligible school district employees.”

Last year, the legislature passed a bill providing paid leave to state employees. However, that bill classified educators as “district employees,” so teachers were not included. H.3908 seeks to remedy that by ensuring teachers and other district employees receive the same benefits as other state employees.

Specifically, the bill would provide:

- Six weeks paid leave to an employee that gives birth or is "primarily responsible for furnishing the care and nature" of an adopted child,
- Two weeks paid leave for a parent that did “not give birth” or at the start of a foster placement.

Under this bill, employees would NOT have to exhaust their sick/personal leave before becoming eligible for paid parental leave. Educators that are out on paid parental leave would have those days count toward the 152 days of work required during a school year to be eligible for an additional year of experience on their certificate (and any corresponding step increase in salary).

ASK YOUR SENATOR TO SUPPORT THIS BILL!

Educator Assistance Act

The House Education and Public Works Subcommittee heard testimony on [H.4280](#) (Rep. [Shannon Erickson](#)) on Tuesday. The SCEA President Sherry East testified in favor of this bill, but also voiced concerns from members.

The committee confirmed that their only intention with this legislation is to take some of the burden from educators by eliminating the recertification requirement.

Currently, teachers must earn 120 hours of continuing education credits to the state every five years to renew their teaching certificate and stay in the classroom. This bill would make certifications permanent unless revoked or suspended.

H. 4280 would also allow teachers to get out of their contract for up to ten days following the posting of the district salary schedule.

President East also testified in favor of this part of the bill but requested that teachers be given more time to get out of their contracts and move around after the contract deadline, which the committee agreed to take into consideration.

The subcommittee then favorably reported the bill, and it will now head to full committee.

Click [here](#) to send a thank-you email to the Education & Public Works Subcommittee!

South Carolina Freedom Caucus

This session, most of the anti-public-education policies and bills have been proposed by members of the South Carolina Freedom Caucus. This caucus, which is made primarily of extreme rightwing legislators, has spearheaded the push to implement a national anti-public-education political agenda that champions bills such as vouchers and censorship.

A key part of the Freedom Caucus playbook is refusing to explain or engage in good-faith debate on these harmful proposals; as a result, a bipartisan group of lawmakers has begun to call out the Freedom Caucus on their anti-democratic, unpopular, and damaging antics.

Check out [this video](#) to learn more!

Things to Watch for Next Week

Educational Scholarship Trust Fund

S.39 is a voucher bill that would give a limited number of parents up to \$6,000 to send their children to private schools.

This bill sets up Educational Scholarship Trust Funds that would essentially send public money to private schools that can pick, choose, and discriminate against some of South Carolina's most vulnerable students. We feel this money would be better used to support or improve the public schools that proudly welcome, accept, and educate ALL students.

As passed by the Senate, this bill would provide eligible families with up to \$6,000 to spend on a wide range of "eligible expenses."

In the first year of the program, up to 5,000 ESAs would be available to students

living in households making approximately 200% or less of the federal poverty line (Medicaid eligible).

In year three, the program would grow to 15,000 ESAs per year, with student eligibility extending to any student living in a household making 400% or less of the poverty line (an amount equal to roughly \$120,000 for a family of four).

See the video explainer on vouchers [here](#).

The committee passed the bill with a favorable report on Thursday. We expect to see this bill debated on the House floor on Wednesday.

Encourage Your Representative to vote NO on Vouchers!

Read To Succeed

S.418 would limit the existing “Read to Succeed” requirements. Currently, the bill would eliminate testing requirements for middle and high school teachers, and it would provide a new (not additional) test for elementary teachers.

This bill is a direct response to requests from The SCEA members for relief from the exigent requirements mandated in the existing legislation.

The House Education and Public Works K-12 Subcommittee will hear this bill and will take both public and written testimony on the proposal.

Visit The SCEA Action Center!

Numbers to Know

47: Number of state parks in South Carolina

1,500,000: Telehealth interactions in 2021

540: Number of South Carolina adolescents aged 15-19 who died from cancer in 2022

14: Number of lakes and reservoirs in South Carolina

100: Average daily population of children at the SC Department of Juvenile Justice

Education Bills That Moved This Week

[To follow all education bills that moved this week click here.](#)

SB126: CHARTER SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY ACT (HEMBREE G)

- Current Status: 4/19/2023 - Committee report Senate Education: Favorable with amendment
- State Bill Page: [SB126](#)
- News Stories: 4/4/2023 - [SC senators advance “Charter School Accountability Act”](#)

HJR3312: CHILD FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICES STUDY COMMITTEE (HADDON P)

- Current Status: 4/19/2023 - Ratified R. 13
- State Bill Page: [HJR3312](#)

HB4300: FY2023-2024 APPROPRIATIONS (BANNISTER B)

- Current Status: 4/19/2023 - Roll call Ayes-43 Nays-0
- State Bill Page: [HB4300](#)
- News Stories: 4/21/2023 - [\\$55M SC budget earmark would update Greenville’s Lockheed Martin campus](#)
- 4/20/2023 - [One SC senator tried but failed to quash short-term rental limits in Charleston beach towns](#)
- 4/5/2023 - [State worker raises planned in South Carolina Senate budget](#)
- 4/5/2023 - [Want to watch TikTok dances? Access to the app could be banned from SC school devices](#)

HB3728: TRANSPARENCY AND INTEGRITY IN EDUCATION ACT (FELDER R)

- Current Status: 4/19/2023 - Committee report Senate Education: Favorable with amendment
- State Bill Page: [HB3728](#)
- News Stories: 4/13/2023 - [SC bill requiring “fact-based” school lessons on race has bipartisan support after changes](#)
- 2/10/2023 - [SC “critical race theory” bill undermined by proposed changes, says GOP lead sponsor](#)
- 2/9/2023 - [SC House approves bill allowing parents to sue over suspicions of racist classroom lessons](#)
- 1/25/2023 - [S.C. committee advances limits to classroom teaching on race](#)

SB256: SUNSCREEN AT SCHOOL (JOHNSON M)

- Current Status: 4/25/2023 - House Education and Public Works, (Bill Scheduled for Hearing)
- State Bill Page: [SB256](#)

SB39: EDUCATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP TRUST FUND (GROOMS L)

- Current Status: 4/20/2023 - SECOND READING STATEWIDE CONTESTED BILLS
- State Bill Page: [SB39](#)
- News Stories: 4/5/2023 - [Former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush advocates in South Carolina for school voucher bill](#)
- 2/1/2023 – [What's the price tag on private education? Here's what Midlands schools charge for tuition](#)
- 2/1/2023 - [SC Senate approves school voucher bill, next headed to House of Representatives](#)

SB305: WORK EXPERIENCE CREDIT FOR NEW TEACHERS (YOUNG, JR. T)

- Current Status: 4/13/2023 - STATEWIDE SECOND READING BILLS
- State Bill Page: [SB305](#)
- News Stories: 4/13/2023 - [Work experience outside the classroom could help new teachers earn more in SC](#)

HB3908: PAID FAMILY LEAVE (COLLINS N)

- Current Status: 4/20/2023 - Senate Finance Budget: K-12 Education Subcommittee, (Bill Scheduled for Hearing)
- State Bill Page: [HB3908](#)
- News Stories: 4/6/2023 - [SC House OKs up to 6 weeks paid leave for K-12 teachers after having or adopting a child](#)
- 3/31/2023 - [SC could become 1st state in Southeast to guarantee teachers 6 weeks paid family leave](#)
- 3/30/2023 - [Will SC teachers get paid parental leave like state employees? Here's what's proposed](#)

Bills That Saw No Movement, but We

Continue to Monitor

Academic Choice in Education (ACE)

S.285, would strengthen an existing program by encouraging companies or institutions to fund scholarships for students to attend private schools. Donors would receive state tax credits with a \$10,000 limit.

The SCEA is against any legislation that will use funding in the interest of private schools that can discriminate against South Carolina students, while our public schools lack the necessary resources.

The bill remained in committee this week.

Encourage Your Representative to vote NO on Vouchers!

Gender Identity

S.627 mostly pertains to medical care, but it does include a section that prevents employees of public schools from “knowingly withholding from a minor’s parent or legal guardian information that [their] gender is inconsistent with [their] sex.”

It also requires educators to inform parents/legal guardians if they “know or suspect that a student suffers from gender dysphoria [or] gender identity disorder.”

The SCEA fears this legislation will strip students of their privacy and prevent a safe environment for them to communicate with their educators freely.

This bill also did not see any movement last week, but The SCEA will continue to monitor.

Take Action to Protect the Confidentiality of Educators!

Upcoming Meetings of Interest

Below are meetings scheduled for next week on bills of interest to you. You can click on the date link to view the agenda and the bill number to see the legislation.

[Tue 4/25 in Blatt Room 433](#)

- [S.256](#) (Sunscreen at School); [S.299](#) (Joint Citizens and Legislative Committee on Children); [S.418](#) (Read to Succeed Endorsements); [H.4280](#) (Educator Assistance Act); [H.4352](#) (Middle Level Education Month)

Tue 4/25 10:00 AM in Blatt Room 433

- [S.299](#) (Joint Citizens and Legislative Committee on Children); [S.418](#) (Read to Succeed Endorsements); [H.4352](#) (Middle Level Education Month)

Tue 4/25 3:00 PM in Gressette Room 105

- [H.3908](#) (Paid Family Leave)

Introductions of Interest

Below are bills that were introduced in the House and Senate this week that may be of interest to you. We have provided a brief description as well as a link to the full text of each bill. Please review and let us know if you have any comments or concerns.

H. 4321: Weapons Detectors

Gilliard

- Representative Wendell Gilliard (D-Charleston) introduced a bill that would enact the "Weapons Detector Systems in Schools Act" to require the installation of weapons detector systems in the public entrances to all public elementary, middle and high schools of the state, including athletic venues.
- The bill was referred to the House Education and Public Works Committee.

H. 4322: Weapons Detectors in Schools Study Committee

Gilliard

- Representative Wendell Gilliard (D-Charleston) introduced a joint resolution that would create the "Weapons Detectors in Schools Study Committee" to study whether it is in the public interest to require the installation and use of weapons detectors, including metal detectors and other means as technology provides, at public schools in this State, taking into consideration, at a minimum, the costs and benefits of the weapons detectors to the residents of this State, potential sources of funding for the weapons detectors, and the feasibility of having each school install and use weapons detectors.
- The resolution was referred to the House Education and Public Works Committee.

H. 4333: Mobile Optometry Units

Smith

- Representative Mark Smith (R-Berkeley), Representative John King (D-York), Representative Sylleste Davis (R-Berkeley) and others introduced a bill that would authorize licensed optometrist, an optometric practice, or organization using a licensed optometrist to operate the mobile optometric unit on the site of a Title 1 public school to the students attending the school or during the summer at a site of an organization serving children from low-income communities.
- The bill was referred to the House Medical, Military, Public and Municipal Affairs Committee.

H. 4334: SC Residential Opportunity and Education Act

Jones

- Representative Wendell Jones (D-Greenville), Representative Wendell Gilliard (D-Charleston), Representative John King (D-York) and others introduced a bill that would enact the "South Carolina Residential Opportunity and Education Act" to authorize counties and municipalities to use inclusionary zoning strategies to increase the development of affordable housing for low and moderate income families.
- The bill was referred to the House Medical, Military, Public and Municipal Affairs Committee.

H. 4352: Middle Level Education Month

Calhoon

- Representative Paula Calhoon (R-Lexington) and Representative Raye Felder (R-York) introduced a bill to designate the month of March of each year as "Middle Level Education Month" to recognize the importance of middle level education for students.
- The bill was referred to the House Education and Public Works Committee.

S. 743: Parents Bill of Rights

Kimbrell

- Senator Josh Kimbrell (R-Spartanburg) introduced a bill that would enact the "Parental Bill of Rights" to provide that parents have a fundamental right to direct the upbringing, education, and care of their children.
- Important information relating to a child should not be withheld, either inadvertently or purposefully, from his or her parent, including information relating to the child's health, well-being, and education, while the child is in the custody of the school district.
- The bill was referred to the Senate Family & Veterans' Services Committee.

