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*Legislative Update Week 13*  
*April 8th, 2023*



*The SCEA members attended the Democratic Black Caucus dinner. From left: Bianca Woodward, Aiken; Stephanie Johnson, Richland; Representative Gilda Cobb-Hunter, Orangeburg; The SCEA President Sherry East; Iva Green, Orangeburg; and Bessie Wright, Richland.*

## Things To Know from This Week

### **Paid Family Leave for School District Employees**

[H.3908](#) received its third reading on the House floor this week and passed 113-0. This bill will now move to the Senate for a scheduled subcommittee hearing.

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!](#)

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## Budget

The Senate Finance Committee on Tuesday approved a \$13 billion budget for the next fiscal year. This budget would increase the minimum teacher salary for every position and experience level.

Specifically, the plan would raise the statewide starting salary for teachers by \$2,500, up to \$42,500. The minimum pay for each step on the teacher pay schedule — based on a teacher’s experience and education — would also increase by \$2,500.

Districts already paying above the new minimums could decide if they want to spend their additional money on further raises or elsewhere.

It’s important to note that this is NOT a raise of \$2,500 for all teachers, but instead, an increase to the minimum teacher salary schedule, which does not guarantee a uniform statewide raise to all teachers. Teachers will instead receive differing raises, based on the district in which they work.

The Senate returns Tuesday and Wednesday for more work on the budget and full Senate debate begins on April 17.

Read more [here](#).

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## Educational Scholarship Trust Fund

The SCEA President Sherry East testified against S.39 in front of the full House Education and Public Works Committee on Tuesday.

S.39 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 that apply for an ESA with \$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 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).

This is money that could be used for public schools that will no longer be available to these schools. See a helpful video explainer on vouchers [here](#).

The committee passed the bill with a favorable report on Thursday. It will now move to the House floor.

**Tell Your Representative to Vote NO on Vouchers!**

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## Things to Watch for Next Week

### Censorship

The [Senate Education Subcommittee](#) will meet to discuss H.3728 on Tuesday, April 11 at 9:30 a.m. While the subcommittee will no longer take public comment live in this meeting, you can still submit written testimony.

This bill is a censorship bill that could limit discussions of race, gender, and other important issues in K-12 and higher education classrooms, making it difficult for many teachers to accurately teach their subjects and restricting educators' ability to respect, reflect, and protect all students in their classrooms.

A dangerous provision of this bill, as it is currently written, includes the ability for any person in the nation to sue a South Carolina school district and/or educator. Additionally, the requirement for educators to post lesson plans three days ahead could limit their ability to teach current events.

The SCEA is concerned that this type of complaint process would be misused and/or abused by anti-public education advocates to bring erroneous challenges against teachers.

Take action now to stand up for truth!

Visit The SCEA Action Center!

## Numbers to Know

**8:** Number earthquakes reported throughout the state in 2023

**30%:** Average percentage of graduates who leave SC after graduating from college

**39:** Number of states that allow online horse race wagering

**63%:** Percentage of Amber Alerts issued for abduction cases in 2020

**750,000:** Number of students in SC public schools

## Education Bills That Moved This Week

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

### **SB39: EDUCATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP TRUST FUND (GROOMS L)**

- Current Status: 4/6/2023 - Committee report House Education and Public Works: Favorable

- 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](#)
- 1/26/2023 - [SC governor renews push for abortion ban in State of State](#)
- 1/23/2023 - [SC lawmakers, superintendent push for school vouchers, but do they help students succeed?](#)
- 1/17/2023 - [Tax money for students for private school on SC Senate floor](#)
- 1/17/2023 - [Editorial: If private schools get SC tax money, they need to be accountable to taxpayers](#)
- 1/10/2023 - [Abortion, taxes, school choice: What to watch in 2023 as SC lawmakers return to the State House](#)
- 12/28/2022 - [Funding of religious schools, abortion access: SC legislation to watch for in 2023 session](#)

### **HB3908: PAID FAMILY LEAVE (COLLINS N)**

- Current Status: 4/6/2023 - Referred to Committee Senate Finance ([Senate Journal-page 39](#))
- 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](#)

### **SB126: CHARTER SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY ACT (HEMBREE G)**

- Current Status: 4/3/2023 - Senate Subcommittee recommends passage, as amended, Senate Education Subcommittee on SB 126
  - State Bill Page: [SB126](#)
  - News Stories: 4/4/2023 - [SC senators advance “Charter School Accountability Act”](#)
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# Bills That Saw No Movement, but We Continue to Monitor

## Academic Choice in Education (ACE)

S.285 would strengthen a program currently in place 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 children while our public schools continue to go without necessary resources.

The bill remained in committee this week.

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## Gender Identity

S.627 pertains to mostly to medical care; however, it also includes three significant education-related provisions:

- Prohibits school personnel to “encourage or coerce a minor to withhold from the minor’s parent or legal guardian the fact that the minor’s perception of his or her gender is inconsistent with his or her sex.”
- Prohibits school personnel from withholding from a minor’s “parent or guardian information related to the minor’s perception that his or her gender is inconsistent with his or her sex.”
- Requires school personnel to report to a parent or legal guardian if they “suspect or know that a student suffers from gender dysphoria, gender identity disorder, or other psychological conditions that can result in a person identifying with a gender different than that of their sex.”

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!](#)

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## 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 4/11 9:30 AM in Gressette Room 207](#)

[H 3728](#) (Transparency and Integrity in Education Act)

[Wed 4/12 10:00 AM in Gressette Room 105](#)

[S 126](#) (Charter School Accountability Act); [S 244](#) (School Trustees); [S 305](#) (Work Experience Credit for New Teachers); [H 3728](#) (Transparency and Integrity in Education Act); [H 3797](#) (Military Temporary Remote School Enrollment Act)

[Tue 4/18 in Blatt Room 433](#)

[S 256](#) (Sunscreen at School); [H 3309](#) (Seizure Safe Schools Act); [S 418](#) (Read to Succeed Endorsements); [H 4100](#) (Countywide School District Mandate); [H 4280](#) (Educator Assistance Act)

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## 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. 4266: Week of the Young Child](#)**

*Gilliard*

- Representative Wendell Gilliard (D-Charleston), Representative Terry Alexander (D-Florence), Representative Carl Anderson (D-Georgetown) and others introduced a resolution to recognize April 1-7, 2023, as the "Week of the Young Child" in South Carolina to acknowledge the importance of early education for young leaders.

The resolution was adopted by the House.

### **[H. 4280: Educator Assistance Act](#)**

*Erickson*

- Representative Shannon Erickson (R-Beaufort), Representative Annie McDaniel (D-Fairfield), Representative Jeff Bradley (R-Beaufort) and others introduced a bill to enact the "Educator Assistance Act" that would make a

professional certificate issued by the State Board of Education permanent unless revoked or suspended.

- If suspension occurs due to breach of contract, the suspension would have to begin on the date such contract is breached with the district and run for a period of time deemed appropriate by the State Board of Education, not to exceed six months from the date of breach.

The bill was referred to the House Education and Public Works Committee.

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