



## **2019 Legislative Update**

**Week 3- Day 18**

**March 22, 2019**

### **Week 3 Was the Place to Be**

This week was probably the busiest week for our FEA team since the MSD bill arming educators dropped last session. SB 7070, the big Senate education package, was heard, as were SB 7030 and the companion House measure, HB 5101, that allows classroom teachers to volunteer to be armed as part of the Guardian program. Several House proposed committee bills regarding vouchers and teacher bonuses were both filed and heard in committee, and budgets were released in the House and Senate. See the rundown below.

### **Money, Money, Money... Money!**

The Senate and House each released budgets for the 2019-2020 fiscal year. Surprise, the base student allocation (BSA) isn't \$0.47 — hopefully they learned their lesson from last year.

The Senate proposed an astonishing \$1.1 billion increase for public education, resulting in a \$350 increase in per-FTE funding and an increase of \$149.40 in BSA — over and above the governor's request of an increase of \$50 in BSA. The House, however, proposed an increase in FTE funding of \$167.79 per student and a BSA increase of \$38.34.

Don't start writing extra checks and raising your household budgets just yet. These proposed budgets change how Best & Brightest (B&B) bonuses are funded. In the current fiscal year, funding for the B&B bonuses is not included in the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP). The FEFP is the funding formula that provides funds school boards can draw from for things like salaries and benefits. Both budget proposals move B&B funding inside the FEFP, so it looks like more of an increase in new money in per-full time equivalent (FTE) funding and in the base student allocation (BSA) than there actually is. Despite our efforts, the Legislature still refuses to acknowledge that the funding would better be used as a non-restrictive funding source for districts to use as salary increases, rather than bonuses.

The House and Senate are pretty far apart in their funding proposals. We'll be pushing hard for the Senate's position on funding, but we have a long way to go in this budget process before both chambers can finally agree on, and vote for, a final budget package (which, of course, also has to survive the veto pen of the governor).

### **Welcome to the Gun Show**

As you likely are aware, the Senate proposed [SB 7030](#) as an expansion of legislation passed last year in the wake of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting. One of the provisions in this year's bill is to expand the Guardian program to include classroom teachers to be volunteers to be trained and carry a weapon in their classrooms and on their campuses. Teachers were exempted from participating in the legislation passed last session, The Senate [Infrastructure and Security Committee](#) was scheduled to hear the bill Wednesday, and the committee room was packed to capacity with advocates against the bill. However, Chairman Tom Lee (R-Brandon), with time in the committee running low, decided to temporarily postpone (TP) SB 7030 until another time.

The bill has been placed on the committee agenda at 4 p.m. Tuesday, March 26, so if you haven't contacted the committee to urge members to remove the expansion of the Guardian program so

that classroom teachers remain exempt from volunteering to carry a weapon, now is the time to call or [email through the FEA Action Center!](#)

The House, not to be outdone, decided to take up school safety this week also, and released proposed committee bill EDC 19-02 (now [HB 7093](#)) late Tuesday night. The bill was immediately put on the agenda to be heard in the House [Education Committee](#) on Thursday morning at 8 a.m. We want to offer a great big thank you to three of our members who testified in opposition to the bill as former military or law enforcement officers — UTD Vice President Tony White, Broward teacher Rick Hoye and Osceola Dean Lare Allen. Their testimony was powerful to hear.

After public testimony, there was great debate for and against the bill, but the bill ultimately passed by a party-line 11-5 vote. The bill has been referred to the [Appropriations Committee](#), and we expect it will be heard next week. Please consider making a call to members of the House Appropriations Committee and urge them to remove the provision to expand the Guardian program to allow classroom teachers to volunteer to be trained to carry a weapon. Tell them that only trained law enforcement should be carrying weapons to protect our schools.

### [Bonuses](#)

The House also revealed their Best & Brightest bonus proposal, while the Senate continued to advance their B&B changes in [SB 7070](#). The Senate's proposal changes the B&B bonuses to three bonuses for recruitment, retention and recognition. That works out as:

- Recruitment bonuses for newly hired teachers in specific subject areas
- Retention bonuses for “highly effective” and “effective” teachers in schools that have demonstrated academic improvement by an average of 3 percentage points over three years
- Recognition bonus for teachers rated “highly effective” and selected by a school principal.

The House, however, reworks B&B bonuses to provide \$2,000 for “highly effective” teachers and \$1,100 for “effective” teachers. That's it, no strings attached. Bonuses do nothing to provide fair, competitive salaries for our teachers or for the hard-working school staff who don't qualify for bonuses because they aren't classroom teachers. We will continue to fight for meaningful salary increases, not bonuses, for all teachers and education staff professionals. Florida has now dropped to 46th in the nation in teacher salaries and is headed toward one of the worst teacher shortage crises in our state's history and Florida continues to rank 47th in pay for our education staff professionals.

The Senate [Appropriations Subcommittee on Education](#) met Tuesday morning to introduce their budget proposal and vote on SB 7070, which passed by a party-line 5-3 vote. We thank Sens. Lauren Book (D-Plantation), Bill Montford (D-Tallahassee) and Jason Pizzo (D-Miami), who voted against the bill. We also thank teachers from Gadsden, Hillsborough, Leon and Osceola who testified against the bill, and many others from across Florida who waived in opposition. The House PreK-12 Appropriations Subcommittee met Wednesday morning to introduce their budget proposal and their proposed committee bill (PCB) on school funding — PKA 1 (now numbered as [HB 5101](#)). We again thank teachers from Escambia and Leon counties who testified against the B&B bonuses in favor of meaningful salary increases.

To keep up with what's happening on bonuses and other issues this session, please sign up for FEA Action Alerts if you haven't already — just text feaactivist to 31996.

### *Do You Want to Visit?*

Big thanks to representatives from Brevard, Broward, Duval, Escambia, Gadsden, Hillsborough, Leon, Marion, Miami-Dade, Osceola, Seminole, Volusia and Wakulla who came to Tallahassee to meet with legislators regarding education issues.

Friendly reminder that we are working closely with the AFL-CIO Working Families Lobby Corps to lobby legislators in Tallahassee on pro-public education issues and against anti-union legislation. If you haven't already, be sure to let us know via the [AFL-CIO Working Families Lobby Corps "I'm coming" tab here](#) when to expect you, and book your hotels ASAP.

If you have any questions about coming to Tallahassee, please don't hesitate to contact Tina Dunbar at [Tina.Dunbar@floridaea.org](mailto:Tina.Dunbar@floridaea.org). Remember that your visit to Tallahassee should include proper Capitol attire — suits, slacks, button-up shirts and/or ties for the men; dresses or slacks and blouses for the ladies; and especially comfortable dress shoes for everyone. We also recommend you bring a light jacket or sweater, and an umbrella. Tallahassee weather is notoriously unpredictable for spring, not to mention committee room temperatures!