



2019 Legislative Update

Week 4, Day 25

March 29, 2019

Back for More in Week 4:

We're nearing the halfway mark in the Florida Legislature. This is when everyone starts panicking and scrambling inside the Capitol building as nearly \$90 billion in state resources is jockeyed. This week each chamber spent hours in appropriations committee meetings, amending the budget proposals and getting the budgets in proper posture for a full debate and vote next week.

Senate Education:

It was another marathon Senate Education Committee meeting Tuesday afternoon, as several bills were presented, amended and approved. They include:

SB 296 by Senator Bill Montford (D-Tallahassee) would extend the amount of time, from 4 to up to 10 years, for a district to levy a sales tax referendum to increase millage for school operations.

SB 1470 by Senator Manny Diaz (R-Hialeah Gardens) meant to streamline the application approval process for high performing charter schools based on existing law via the Charter School Commission (formerly the Charter Appeal Board). The bill would create a list of prohibited charter operators. School districts still remain responsible for over site.

SB 1224 by Senator Gary Farmer (D-Fort Lauderdale) would require training and certification for charter administrators (principal, CFOs and board members, etc.) to ensure they know how to operate an education facility. Allows charters to open prior to the 18 months waiting period if they apply by the February deadline.

SB 354 also by Senator Montford would streamline record-keeping for student immunizations to allow doctors to register vaccinations on the Department of Health's website where districts can obtain student information. While the bill would not change existing exemption or opt-out provisions, some parents expressed concerns about privacy rights and government overreach.

SB 1284 by Senator Diaz would establish a new formula for calculating the District Cost Differential (DCD) using a wage level index vs. the price level index, based on a recommendation from a state study on this issue. The sponsor stated the new formula will be held until next year. The Legislature wants to review the district impact.

[SB 1120](#) by Senator Annette Taddeo (D-Miami) would prohibit corporal punishment in public schools. Florida is one of 17 states that still allows this disciplinary action. A third of our counties also have policies that allow its use in schools. Taddeo's daughter testified and brought the issue to her mom. While the committee ultimately passed the bill, several committee members saw the bill as an attack on local control, which they don't want to remove, and how districts handle disruptive students. As currently drafted, the bill creates some constitutional issues, but the sponsor will bring changes by the next committee stop.

[SB 1132](#) by Senator David Simmons (R-Longwood) would allow districts with successful advanced placement programs granting Capstone Diplomas to receive additional Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP) funding.

School Safety?

This week the school safety packages were heard:

[SB 7030](#) is in its second committee of reference in the Senate.

[HB 7093](#) is in its second and final committee in the House.

SB 7030 was heard Tuesday in the Senate [Infrastructure and Security Committee](#). As you may recall from last week's *Frontline*, SB 7030 had been scheduled but was temporarily postponed (TP'd) in committee last week. This week it was first on the agenda, and the bulk of the two-hour committee meeting was devoted to this bill. Senators Janet Cruz (D-Tampa) and Annette Taddeo (D-Miami) offered amendments to remove the expansion of the Guardian program to allow classroom teachers, exclusively, to volunteer to carry a weapon. It failed. This amendment would also ensure that parents have a choice about whether their child or children are placed in a classroom where a guardian may be carrying a weapon. It failed as well. It would, also, raise the liability for any school district that participates in the Guardian program from \$200,000 to a million dollars. This amendment failed as well.

Two students who went to Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School made a moving presentation. The students testified about what it was like to be in the school when gunfire was going on around them. We thank them for their powerful testimony, along with United Teachers of Dade Vice President Antonio White, Jackson County Education Association President Dave Galloway, high school teacher Timothy Schomburg of DeSoto County, and Broward County educators Felicia Alvarez and Josh Jamieson for testifying in opposition to the expansion of the Guardian program. The bill passed by a party-line 5-3 vote, with Senators Cruz, Linda Stewart (D-Orlando) and Taddeo being in opposition.

[HB 7093](#) was heard in the House [Appropriations Committee](#) on Wednesday. The committee chair pushed this bill to the very end of the agenda and rushed it through. The bill passed by a party-line 9-5 vote. We thank Reps. Ben Diamond, Bobby DuBose, Nicholas Duran, Joseph Geller, Evan Jenne, Kionne McGhee, Carlos Smith, Richard Stark and Barbara Watson for testifying and voting in opposition and many who debated against the bill. We also thank many teachers who waived in opposition to the bill.

Expect SB 7030 to be heard in Appropriations Committee, which isn't scheduled to meet again until April 11. **HB 7093 will be on the House floor for a full vote by the Chamber on Wednesday, April 3 and Thursday, April 4.**

Everyone Wants to Come to Tallahassee:

Big thanks to representatives from Broward, DeSoto, Flagler, Lee, Miami-Dade, Orange, Pasco and Volusia who came to Tallahassee this week to meet with legislators regarding education issues.

Friendly reminder: 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. 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!