

Weekly Legislative Update: **Education**

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End of the 2022 Session Report

This was a good year for the education and safety of our students. Most of the bills we supported passed as you can see below.

Bills That Have Passed

HB 1630 Makes it unlawful to carry a firearm onto facilities being used for official meetings of a school board, other governmental public meetings, and election facilities. A substitute bill, including the issues addressed in HB 1618 regarding elections facilities, was passed by the House Civil Rights & Judiciary Committee and by the House 57-41. The Senate Law & Justice Committee passed the bill as did the Senate 28-20. The Senate approved two amendments, the House concurred, and it is on the Governor's desk..

HB 1664 Increases prototypical school formulas for physical, social, and emotional support in schools by increasing the number of school nurses, social workers, psychologists, and counselors in the prototypical school funding model over three school years, beginning in 2022-23. It passed the House 73-23 and the Senate 45-2. It was amended by the Senate, the House concurred, and it is on the Governor's desk.

HB 1153 Increasing language access in public schools. Requires all public school districts to have a language access program that includes spoken language and sign language interpreters working in public schools, to interpret for students' families, students, and communities in educational settings outside the classroom. Passed the House 83-13, and the Senate 43- 5. It was amended in the Senate, the House concurred, and now is on the Governor's desk.

HB 1723 Closes the digital equity divide by increasing the accessibility and affordability of telecommunication services, devices, and training. It was passed by the House 68 -30 and the Senate 27-20. It was amended by the Senate, the House concurred, and now is on the Governor's desk.

HB 1590 Enrollment stabilization funding for local schools to address enrollment declines due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Passed the House 77-18 the Senate 28-21 with an amendment, the House concurred, and it is now on the Governor's desk.

[SB 5497](#) Extends voting authority to student members on the state board of education. The Senate Early Learning & K-12 Committee passed a substitute, which passed the Senate 28-21 and the House 68-31 and was signed by the Governor.

[SB 5933](#) Establishing a school seismic safety grant program. Establishes a school seismic safety grant program for remediation of seismic or tsunami hazards in qualifying school buildings. This bill passed the Senate 49-0 and is part of the proposed Senate Operations and Capital Budgets. The bill passed the House 98-0 and is on the Governor's desk.

[SB 5581](#) Addressing pupil transportation allocations. Requires 100 percent reimbursement of school district costs for transporting qualifying students with disabilities, who are homeless, and in foster care. Passed the Senate 49-0 and was referred to the House Appropriations Committee, but no hearing was held. A budget proviso for \$13 million, however, will cover at least some of this cost.

Bills We Support That Didn't Pass

[HB 1611](#) Advancing equity in programs for highly capable students. Universal screening is required to increase the participation of students who are traditionally underrepresented in the highly capable program. This bill passed the House 96-0, and the Senate Early Learning & K-12 Education Committee passed it on to the Rules Committee. It did not move out of Rules.

[SB 5537](#) Changes compulsory school attendance to include children five, six, and seven years of age. Washington is the only state that requires school attendance beginning with children who are eight years of age. LWVWA has supported this change for many years. The Senate Early Learning & K-12 Committee passed a substitute, which just includes six and seven years old, on Jan. 28 and sent it to the Ways & Means Committee, which never held a hearing.

[SB 5630](#) Expands the program of basic education to include early learning. Early learning would be phased in for three and four year-olds starting in the 2026-27 school year and making it an entitlement by the 2029-30 school year. LWVWA has had a position that basic education should include birth to five years. This is a start, but it never received a hearing.

Bills We Oppose

[HB 1591](#) Provides access to local enrichment funding for charter schools. Funding for grants, approximately \$6-8 million, was provided in the final budget.

The following are some of the reasons we opposed this: Since charter schools were first authorized, six have closed, two were investigated for violating special education laws, and several had some financial problems. Also, average total salary for charter school instructional staff is substantially lower than the salary allocation from the state. At least four of the closed schools had been awarded grants of over \$1 million from the federal charter schools' program,

and we have been unable to find out how much total state funding went to these closed schools or if any of it was returned to the state.

Last year Impact Charter Schools received approximately \$339,872 and Summit Charter Schools received over \$1.5 million from the Paycheck Protection Program. None of our 295 school districts received this funding from the PPP. Recently a state audit found that Summit Sierra and Summit Atlas, schools in Seattle, and Summit Olympus, a school in Tacoma, received nearly \$4 million in funding for teachers who lacked proper accreditation, which may now need to be repaid.

It would seem wise to pause for a year and request a performance and financial audit of all the funding received from all sources of the charter school program and its accountability before extra funding is given them.

How You Can Be Involved

- During the legislative session we will send Action Alerts in the [Legislative Newsletter](#). Please respond to these, which will direct you to an application to facilitate communicating with your legislators on an important vote in committees or on the chamber floor.
- Local Leagues in Washington have action chairs who coordinate action teams. Some local Leagues have education teams to take action locally. Contact your local League action chair to find out and join.
- You may also express your opinion on legislation with the LWVWA issue chairs. We will take your perspectives under considerations as we determine our support for legislation and prepare testimony. Catherine Ahl, Education Issue Chair, cahl@lwvwa.org, 360-697-7924