

Legislative Update

Week One

We are ten days in the 2023 legislative session. Last week, the Senate suspended the rules and were passing bills. A total of 23 bills were passed with no discussion of the bills, no copies to review, and new senators who had no idea what they were voting for. Bills passed pertaining to our issues included the following:

- This bill (**SB 127**) is in response to hospitals in the northern part of the state threatening to discontinue service to PEIA patients July 1, 2023. This is a bipartisan bill designed to increase PEIA reimbursement to hospitals.
- The anti-critical race theory legislation also passed the senate with the rules suspended. This is the same bill that did not make the deadline last legislative session. Senator Tarr's anti critical race theory bill (**SB 130**) is a solution in search of a problem. The fate of this bill now lies with the House of Delegates.
- Another bill passing the WV Senate on the opening day will require each county Board of Education to ensure all meetings are open to the public through in-person attendance and broadcast live on its website (**SB 139**).
- And a bill to allow county Boards of Education participating in a multicounty vocational center to determine a career technical education program be part of the local high school in order to better serve students (**SB 145**).

House and Senate committees have acted on a few education-related bills. These are the bills we are following:

- **Classroom aides bill (HB 2003)** sponsored by Speaker Hanshaw provides funding for public elementary schools to hire teacher aides who can help students meet requirements for reading and math by third grade. The bill provides a multi-tiered system of support for both reading and math using screening and benchmarking. *Bill status:* It was reported out of House Education with amendments and referred to the House Finance Committee.
- **Athletic eligibility and transfers bill (SB 262)**, which would allow a student athlete one transfer of schools during their 9-12 school years while retaining athletic eligibility. This transfer does not limit or restrict a student from transferring back to their residential district and the WVSSAC may make eligibility determinations on a case-by-case basis. *Bill status:* The bill advanced from Senate Education Committee and moves to the Senate.
- **ESP classification clarification bill (HB 2602)** corrects last year's bill that erroneously deleted sections of code concerning Aide V (special education) and Aide VI (Behavior Disorder). The definitions are added back to the code in this bill. The bill passed the committee and will be reported to the floor with the recommendation it does pass but first be reported to the Committee on Finance. *Bill status:* The bill was passed out of the House Education Committee and is on first reading in the House today.
- **Child sexual violence prevention bill (SB 124)** authorizes the state Board of Education to create a program for child sexual abuse prevention and in-service training. This bill is important because it brings awareness to students, even if such incidents aren't occurring in our schools. *Bill status:* The bill passed on third reading in the Senate today and will head to the House.

Make your voice heard throughout this session!

State lawmakers need to hear from you! Contact them today at [wvea.org/housesenatelegislativecontacts](https://www.wvea.org/housesenatelegislativecontacts) and urge them to make public education a priority and to keep their promises to provide resources for students and educators.

Call your lawmakers and email them – make your voice heard. Tell them your story and the stories of our students and how their actions, or inactions, impact academic success. Remember, you are the true experts of public education!