



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

AFT-West Virginia, AFL-CIO



Fighting for Public Education... From Statehouse to Schoolhouse

This week at the Capitol:

Charter School Expansion

[HB 2012](#) quickly passed the full house 66-32 a few weeks ago. Initially this bill:

- Changed limitations on amount of Charter Schools from 3 to 10
- Removed revocation provisions
- Created new authorizer as “West Virginia Professional Charter School Board”
- Created Virtual Charter Schools

Senator Romano was successful in getting an amendment to HB 2012 during a Senate Education Committee meeting last week. The amendment called for limiting charter schools back to three for the next 3 years, and limiting virtual charter schools to a total of 1500 students for 3 years. The amendment was narrowly approved by the committee, 7-6.

However, HB 2012 was later amended on the Senate floor back to its original provisions. The bill passed on Wednesday, the House concurred with the Senate version and the bill has completed legislative action. HB 2012 now awaits the Governor’s signature.

Work Stoppages and Strikes

The Senate version of the strike bill, [Committee Sub for SB 11](#), passed with an amendment to take out the entire provision that stated if an originally scheduled instructional day or noninstructional day is canceled due to a concerted work stoppage or strike by the employees assigned to a school, the school for which the day was canceled may not participate in any extracurricular activities during any part of that same day. After the bill went to the House, this amendment was stripped and SB 11 passed the House on March 2 and the Senate concurred with the House’s amendments. The bill has completed legislative action and moves to the Governor’s desk for signature.

Hope Scholarships

[HB 2013](#) creates Hope Scholarships, which are basically education savings accounts or ESAs. This bill quickly moved through committee and passed the House 60-39 a few weeks ago.

Revised specifics of the bill include:

- 100% of state aid formula on base granted per student annually
- Can be used for private schools and/ or related educational expenses by definition
- Creates a new Board- “Hope Scholarship Board”
- Shall be operational by July 2022
- Approximately \$4600/yr based on previous year state aid formula per pupil average
- Must apply annually
- Contains minimal anti-discrimination provisions for students
- Does not provide financial accountability provisions to ensure funding is used to meet student needs

Two weeks ago, the House moved to reconsider and recommitted the bill to House Finance. The House Finance Committee took the bill up this week and reduced the per pupil amount to \$3000 in order to lower the financial impact. The bill was later amended on the House floor to restore the \$4600 per pupil allowance and passed the full House on March 4. It now moves to the Senate for action.

All three bills above will have a devastating impact on public education and West Virginia’s children. Please contact Governor Justice at 304-558-2000 or 1-888-438-2731 and ask him to veto these bills.

Status Update on Major Education Bills:

Paycheck Deception

[Committee Sub for HB 2009](#), a bill to attack and silence the voices of workers, passed already the House. It is currently awaiting consideration by the Senate Judiciary Committee, where it has been placed on the agenda and removed several times. AFT-WV feels it is imminent that HB 2009 will eventually pass the committee.

The bill:

- Relates to limitations on the use of wages and agency shop fees by employers and labor organizations for political activities and/or union dues
- Attacks payroll deduction and unions
- Is a direct interference of government into private contract between employee and union
- Attempts to silence workers' collective voices by limiting the ability to invest in their professional voice and elections

Changes in Master's Degree Pay

[Committee Sub for SB 15](#) changes the salary increase provisions in state code for a master's degree and passed the Senate on a 24-9 vote. It has been pending consideration by the House Education Committee for over a week.

The changes would be effective July 1, 2022, and states that classroom teachers receiving a master's degree on or after that date cannot qualify for "M.A." and may only qualify for an in-field master's degree. The salary increase for holding an in-field master's degree is contingent upon a classroom teacher's assignment teaching in that MA field for at least one half of the total classes assigned.

Alternative Certification

[Eng. Committee Sub for SB 14](#) weakens the standards for alternative certification for teachers. The bill has passed both chambers and completed legislative action. The bill now awaits the Governor's signature.

Other Educations Bills

[HB 2362](#) requires the State Board of Education to implement trauma-informed practices in grades K-12 and provide the necessary training and support to implement the program. The bill passed the House Education Committee last Thursday and awaits action by the House Finance Committee. This is one of the few positive bills for education that is moving at this point and AFT-WV has offered our professional development trainers to implement these practices for fee.

[HB 2791](#) relates to enrollment at the county vocational schools. The bill allows universal acceptance of non-public students to participate in vocational programs throughout all 55 counties. The bill was passed the House and moves to the Senate for action.

[Comm Sub for SB 375](#) relates to county boards of education policies for open enrollment, criteria for enrollment denial and adds a procedure for appeal if denied. The bill passed Senate Education and is on 2nd reading in the Senate.

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- Make sure your cell phone number is updated with us! During the 2019 strike, AFT-WV deployed a new technology that enables us to instantly have a text conversation with all members with a valid mobile number on file. If you haven't recently updated your contact information, please email or call the office with your new number.
- Many AFT local presidents and staff representatives use the Remind app to communicate with their local members. Ask your local president or staff rep if your county uses Remind and get signed up!