

January 21, 2019

66th Legislature kicks off with fast pace, bill hearings

Prepared by Marie Sullivan, WSPTA Legislative Consultant, legconsultant@wastatepta.org

As mentioned last week, it was clear the 2019 105-day session was going to be unusual, with nearly 300 bills introduced by the first day and some 750 bills by the end of the week. Budget committees started the week with testimony on the Governor’s proposed two-year spending plans on operations, capital, new revenue and transportation. Policy committees heard testimony on measures designed to reduce gun violence, raise the legal age for tobacco and vaping products to 21, and make changes to the state’s environmental and climate policies, among many others.

In his [address](#) to a joint session of the House and Senate on January 15th, Governor Jay Inslee called on legislators to take risks and fix the state’s most pressing problems: climate change, mental health, the at-risk Southern resident orca population, and education funding. “We are the state that invests in our people,” said the governor, stating that is why Washington is the best place to work and to do business. With education, Governor Inslee mentioned his budget investments in expanded early learning, approaches to career-connected learning, and improving access to higher education.

The House Capital Budget Committee heard a report on recommendations from the Joint Task Force on Improving State Funding for School Construction. Watch the hour-long staff report and discussion [here](#).

Work over the interim by WSPTA members and others interested in best practices for school meals has resulted in the introduction of [HB 1272](#). The bill, sponsored by freshman legislator Rep. My-Linh Thai, D-Bellevue, has been sent to the House Education Committee but is not yet scheduled for a hearing.

Dissatisfied with the way state colleges and universities are treating college-credit programs of AP, IB and Cambridge after last session’s bill to create parity with a score of 3 on AP exams, Senator Mark Mullet, D-Issaquah, introduced [SB 5410](#), which would require a uniform standard of scoring a 4 on IB Standard Level and Higher Level exams and an E on Cambridge exams.

Status of Top 5 Legislative Priorities (all bills may be accessed [here](#))

- Social and Emotional Learning:
 - SB 5082 would create an SEL committee to promote and expand SEL.
 - The bill had a public hearing Friday, January 18th, with seven speakers in favor, one opposed, and dozens signing in as Support.
- School Construction and Simple Majority for Bonds:
 - Over the interim the Joint Legislative Task Force for Improving State Funding for School Construction held public meetings, toured school sites, and debated recommendations. The

- [final report](#) was issued in December and makes recommendations aligned with WSPTA's position on school construction.
- Several bills have been introduced on changing the percentage needed to pass school bonds:
 - HJR 4203/SJR 8201 would ask the public to vote on a constitutional amendment to allow bonds to pass by simple majority.
 - SB 5252 would set approval for bonds at 55%, with SJR 8202 creating the accompanying constitutional amendment.
 - Preventing Gun Violence:
 - HB 1010 would revise firearms and dangerous weapon provisions giving the Washington state patrol the option to destroy a forfeited firearm. WSPTA testified in favor.
 - Strategies to Address the Teacher Shortage:
 - HB 1139 is an omnibus bill to address the teacher shortage.
 - This topic has a work session planned on January 22 and a public hearing on the bill Thursday, January 24th at 8 a.m.
 - Strategic K-12 Investments to Close Gaps:
 - Authorize school districts to choose their levy limit - \$1.50 per \$1,000 assessed value or \$2,500 per student – and increase the Local Effort Assistance (LEA)/levy equalization limit from \$1,500 per student.
 - SB 5313 is the Governor's proposal and would set school district maximum levy authority at 28% of a district's state and federal funding, and LEA as percentage in comparison to the state average 14% levy.
 - SB 5316 would authorize school districts to choose between the \$1.50/\$1000 AV or \$2,500. It is silent on LEA.
 - Close Special Education funding gaps:
 - SB 5091 would make changes to the state Safety Net program.
 - SB 5312 would create a multi-tiered approach to special education funding, set in the omnibus operating budget every two years, with the percentage of funding tied to the percentage of time a student with special needs spends in a general education class.
 - Increase prototypical school funding to Initiative 1351 levels to improve student well-being:
 - SB 5315 is Governor Inslee's proposal to increase education positions that support enhanced ratios for school counselors, nurses, social workers, and psychologists.
 - HB 1265 would increase the ratios of school counselors to decrease caseloads to the national average, phasing in the increases over several fiscal years and starting with schools most in need of improvement as identified by OSPI.
 - HB 1221 would focus on suicide prevention, but also would allow certain funds to be used to expand programs to include school nurses, school social workers, school psychologists, and school counselors, and encourage those school staff to reach out to mental health providers when they are concerned about a student's mental health and do not know to whom to refer the students.
 - Lower the High-Poverty LAP threshold to the state annual average of free- or reduced-price meal-eligible students to provide services to more students:
 - HB 1384 has been introduced in the House and was referred to the House Education Committee. It has bipartisan sponsorship.

- Include a categorical allocation for high-mobility students.
 - While useful, it does not appear a new categorical program is likely this year. This may be an issue WSPTA works with OSPI and others over the interim to gain traction.

Look for bills and committee hearings that relate to WSPTA’s “Also Supported Positions” adopted at Legislative Assembly and WSPTA resolutions below and in the Bill Tracking List.

WSPTA’s Week in Review

Members of Washington State PTA testified on the following bills this past week:

- President Michelle Nims [testified](#) in favor of HB 1109, the Governor’s operating budget, listing areas of alignment including expansion of early learning and access and affordability to post-secondary education; increased staffing to improve student well-being; and funding for special education.
- Advocacy Director Nancy Chamberlain offered similar [testimony](#) in the Senate Ways & Means Committee on SB 5153, the Governor’s proposed operating budget.
- Gwen Loosmore [testified](#) in favor of HB 1010, which would allow the Washington State Patrol to destroy forfeited guns in its custody.
- Corina Pfeil [testified](#) in favor of SB 5057, which would raise the legal age to 21 to purchase and use tobacco and vaping products. WSPTA also signed in as Support on the companion bill, HB 1074.

The Week Ahead (Schedule subject to change)

Monday, January 21

1:30 p.m., House Education, HHR A

Work session on the McCleary lawsuit and K-12 Finance.

1:30 p.m., Senate Early Learning & K-12 Education, SHR 1

Work session on Preparing students for the 21st century economy through science, technology, engineering, art, and mathematics

3:30 p.m., Senate Ways & Means, SHR 4

Work session on school districts in a post-McCleary funding world, levies and special education.

Tuesday, January 22

1:30 p.m., House College & Workforce Development, HHR B

Public hearing:

- [HB 1336](#) - Expanding career connected learning opportunities.
- [HB 1340](#) - Establishing a statewide free college program by changing the state need grant to the Washington college promise scholarship.
- [HB 1123](#) - Establishing the Washington promise, providing for affordable access to postsecondary education.

1:30 p.m., Senate Higher Education & Workforce Development, SHR 2

Public hearing:

- [SB 5393](#) - Washington college promise scholarship.
- [SB 5327](#) - Expanding career connected learning opportunities.

3:30 p.m., House Education, HHR A

Work session on teacher shortages and Overview of the testing barriers work group.

Wednesday, January 23

1:30 p.m., Senate Early Learning & K-12 Education, SHR 1

Work session: Funding for special education and local levies.

Public Hearing:

- [SB 5091](#) - Concerning state and federal special education funding.
- [SB 5313](#) - Concerning school levies.
- [SB 5316](#) - Concerning school district enrichment levies.
- [SB 5312](#) - Concerning appropriations for special education programs.

1:30 p.m., House College & Workforce Development, HHR B

Public hearing:

- [HB 1311](#) - Concerning college bound scholarship eligible students.

3:30 p.m., Senate Ways & Means, SHR 4

Work session: Overview of the School Employees Benefits Board and Update

Thursday, January 24

8 a.m., House Education, HHR A

Public hearing:

- [HB 1139](#) - Expanding the current and future educator workforce supply.

3:30 p.m., House Appropriations, HHR A

Work Session:

- Briefing on the School Employees' Benefits Board.
- Briefing on K-12 programs and funding.

Friday, January 25

8 a.m., Senate Early Learning & K-12 Education, SHR 1

Public hearing:

- [SB 5014](#) - Reducing state assessment requirements to only those required for federal purposes in order to facilitate removal of inequitable barriers to students.
- [SB 5146](#) - Concerning flexibility in high school graduation requirements.

Olympia [Capitol Campus Map](#)

HHR refers to hearing rooms in the John L. O'Brien Building

SHR refers to hearing rooms in the John A. Cherberg Building