

February 3, 2019

School safety top issue in education committees this week

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House Education Committee members held a work session on school safety and security January 29th, hearing about the tragic Sandy Hook shooting from Alissa Parker, a parent whose daughter was among the 20 children killed that day. Parker, who has started a non-profit focused on school safety, offered her [observations and recommendations](#) on making schools safer. The committee also heard from University of Washington Tacoma professor Eric Madfis, whose research focuses on the causes of and preventing school violence. His presentation can be found [here](#). The work session followed a [press conference](#) where school safety bills were released by House and Senate Democrats.

The following day, the Senate Early Learning & K-12 Education Committee took testimony on many school safety bills and a Governor-request bill to increase staffing ratios for guidance counselors, social workers, nurses and psychologists. The nearly two-hour hearing was action-packed, and can be watched [here](#). The House Education Committee will take up some school safety bills on Monday, February 4th.

As we end Week 3 of this 105-day session, more than 1,700 bills have been introduced.

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

- Social and Emotional Learning:
 - SB 5082 has been scheduled for a hearing in Senate Ways & Means on February 7.
- School Construction and Simple Majority for Bonds:
 - The Senate Early Learning & K-12 Education Committee has a hearing February 6 on bills that would lower the threshold to pass bonds to a simple majority + one, and a competing idea of dropping the threshold to 55%.
- Preventing Gun Violence:
 - Several bills addressing assault weapons, concealed pistol license requirements, and more continue to be introduced (see the bill list).
- Strategies to Address the Teacher Shortage:
 - HB 1139 is scheduled for a vote in the coming week.
- Strategic K-12 Investments to Close Gaps:
 - Levies: Allow school district choice.
 - No action has been held on increasing or modifying school levies in the past week. Both the House and Senate are considering alternatives.
 - Close Special Education funding gaps
 - Senator Wellman has introduced SB 5726, which would increase the student multiplier from .96 to .98.

- Increase prototypical school funding to Initiative 1351 levels to improve student well-being:
 - As part of the school safety conversation, the Senate education committee heard testimony on SB 5315, Governor Inslee’s proposal to increase education positions that support enhanced ratios for school counselors, nurses, social workers, and psychologists.
 - The House Education committee voted HB 1265 out of committee. The bill 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.
- 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 had a positive public hearing on January 28 and was scheduled for a vote January 31st. Committee members expressed interest in changing the formula from the original bill, and the vote was held over.
- 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:

- Advocacy Director Nancy Chamberlain testified in support of HB 1384, which would reduce the High-Poverty Learning Assistance Program threshold from 50% to the state annual average of students eligible for free or reduced-price meals.
- Seattle PTSA Council member Heidi Bennett testified in support of SB 5410, a bill that would require the state’s colleges and universities to adopt a systemwide policy on awarding college credit for a score of 3 on AP exams, a 4 on standard level and higher-level exams, and an E on Cambridge exams.
- Sylvia Gil of the Edward Pratt Early Learning Center PTA spoke in favor of expanding eligibility to the state’s early learning assistance program, HB 1351.
- Robin Zaback of Northshore testified on SB 5317, a comprehensive school safety bill. Zaback advocated to make one of the required safety drills a Parent/Student reunification drill. She also spoke in favor of the Governor’s school staffing bill, SB 5315.

Clips from testimony are available on the WSPTA blog (you can search on the tags “testimony” or “legislative session”).

The Week Ahead (Schedule subject to change)

Monday, February 4

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

Public Hearing:

1. [HB 1057](#) - Concerning school bus safety.
2. [HB 1191](#) - Concerning school notifications.
3. [HB 1216](#) - *Concerning nonfirearm measures to increase school safety and student well-being.*
4. [HB 1221](#) - Improving crisis planning in schools to prevent youth suicide.

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

Work Session: Setting up success: Home visiting programs and their effect on health and education outcomes.

Public Hearing:

1. [SB 5683](#) - Establishing the welcome to Washington baby act to create family supports through universal home visiting programs and a statewide family linkage program for resources and referrals.
2. [SB 5437](#) - *Expanding eligibility to the early childhood education and assistance program.*

Tuesday, February 5

8 a.m., House Capital Budget, HHR B

Work Session: Public School Seismic Safety Assessment.

Public Hearing:

1. [HB 1245](#) - Concerning comprehensive school safety planning.
2. [HB 1507](#) - Promoting physical safety and security of school buildings, grounds, and surroundings through environmental design principles.

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

Public Hearing:

1. [HB 1263](#) - Concerning support for students experiencing homelessness.
2. [HB 1264](#) - Concerning secondary traumatic stress in public school staff.
3. [HB 1272](#) - *Concerning school lunch durations.*
4. [HB 1454](#) - Concerning students with disabilities.
5. [HB 1479](#) - Building capacity within the educator workforce to improve student mental health and well-being.
6. [HB 1674](#) - Changing the term alternative learning experience to personalized learning experience

Wednesday, February 6

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

Public Hearing:

1. [SJR 8201](#) - *Amending the Constitution to allow a simple majority of voters voting to authorize school district bonds.*

2. [SB 5066](#) - *Concerning school district elections.*
3. [SJR 8202](#) - Amending the Constitution to allow at least fifty-five percent of voters voting to authorize school district bonds.
4. [SB 5252](#) - Providing for approval of school district bonds by fifty-five percent of the voters voting.
5. [SB 5070](#) - Concerning bilingual educators.
6. [SB 5087](#) - Establishing the world language competency grant program.
7. [SB 5159](#) - Concerning the definition of eligible pupil for purposes of the transitional bilingual instruction program.
8. [SB 5354](#) - *Concerning programs for highly capable students.*

Thursday, February 7

8 a.m., House Education, HHR A

Executive action, no public hearing

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

Public Hearing:

7. [HB 1074](#) - Protecting youth from tobacco products and vapor products by increasing the minimum legal age of sale of tobacco and vapor products

3:30 p.m., Senate Ways & Means, SHR 1

Public Hearing:

1. [SSB 5023](#) - Concerning ethnic studies materials and resources for public school students.
2. [SSB 5082](#) - *Promoting and expanding social emotional learning.*

Friday, February 8

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

Public Hearing:

1. [SB 5465](#) - *Concerning basic education funding.*
2. [SB 5532](#) - Concerning special education.
3. [SB 5572](#) - Authorizing modernization grants for small school districts.
4. [SB 5603](#) - Concerning enrollment and course registration access for children of military families.

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