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Cutoffs continue to claim bills, budget negotiations begin

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

Tuesday, April 9th was the deadline for bills to pass out of the fiscal committees to remain under consideration this session. As always, there are exceptions, particularly if funding for a bill has been appropriated in one of the chambers' budgets.

In a bit of a shocker, the Senate Ways & Means Committee failed to bring HB 2108 up for a vote. This is the bill that would delay compliance with the K-3 class size ratios by one year, moving the date to September 1, 2020. Unlike a couple of bills that failed to secure the necessary number of signatures to pass the committee, the bill was skipped over – even after positive testimony and no opposition. This is a bill that can be handled in the omnibus operating budget, but legislators will need to hear from stakeholders on the importance of the delay.

Also failing to pass out of committee were:

- [HB 1272](#) would have directed OSPI to name six elementary schools as demonstration sites for 20 minutes of seated lunchtime;
- [SB 5327](#) would have created a career-connected learning structure (the bill lives on in HB 2158, but it's unclear whether that omnibus higher education/work force development bill will pass both chambers);
- [SB 5354](#), as amended in House Education, would have required school districts to screen newly enrolled students at least once for possible inclusion in the highly capable program;
- [SB 5389](#), as amended in House Education, would have created a telehealth pilot project, among other elements, as well as training and outreach to schools to improve student access to mental health professionals; and
- [SB 5532](#), as amended in House Education, would have directed the Office of Education Ombuds to develop and offer training for parents of students with disabilities related to advocating for their student, as well as special education advisory councils, training for staff, and pilot programs.

On the list of bills of interest, HB 1599, which would stop the requirement to pass the Smarter Balanced Assessment in English and math (and science) for high school graduation and replace it with a multiple pathways approach. The bill was modified in the Senate budget committee; the amendment added AP English Lit and AP computer science, as well as scoring a 3 on AP exams and a 4 on IB exams to those pathways.

The final deadline is Wednesday, April 17, when bills must have cleared the opposite chamber in which they were introduced. Unlike the committee deadlines, this one has a hard and fast 5 PM end time, although a bill may be started before 5:00 and debate could continue for hours.

When legislators arrive back to work on April 18, they will have only 10 days left to wrap up the two-year spending bills and agree or reject the opposite chambers' changes on bills.

As a final note, this is also the time that the Governor will start signing bills. Earlier this week, Governor Jay Inslee signed into law ESHB 1079, which will increase the legal age for tobacco and vaping use and products to 21. Bills that reach Inslee's desk prior to April 23rd must be acted up within five days of receipt, excluding Sundays. Bills that arrive on his desk after that date can be signed 20 days after the end of the regular session, including weekends.

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

The following bills are still under consideration:

- Social and Emotional Learning:
 - [2SSB 5082](#) passed the House as amended in the Education committee, the Appropriations committee and on the floor. The bill will return to the Senate for concurrence with the changes.
- School Construction and Simple Majority for Bonds:
 - Simple majority is dead for the session.
 - [ESSB 5853](#) addresses the School Construction Assistance Program and begins to phase in a higher student space allocation starting July 1, 2021. No bill movement.
- Preventing Gun Violence:
 - Several bills are waiting action in the Senate, including ghost guns, 3D printed guns and other non-traceable guns; domestic violence prevention/removing guns at the scene and time of arrest; and 72-hour mental health crisis hold adding a six-month restriction on gun purchases.
- Strategies to Address the Teacher Shortage:
 - [E2SHB 1139](#), the comprehensive approach to teacher shortage passed the Senate Ways & Means committee before cutoff and is sitting in Rules.
 - [SHB 1621](#) would break down barriers getting into teacher preparation programs. The bill is waiting action on the Senate floor.
- Strategic K-12 Investments to Close Gaps:
 - Levies: Allow school district choice.
 - No changes to either bill (SB 5313, HB 2140). Rather than bring either bill to the floor for a vote, it looks like lawmakers will start negotiating which of the levy approaches they would like to adopt, if any this session.
 - Close Special Education funding gaps
 - [2SSB 5091](#) was modified in House Appropriations, with a two-tiered approach added at the request of OSPI. As drafted, the multiplier would increase to 1.0 for special education students spending 80% or more of their time in a general education classroom and .9823 for special education students spending less than 80% of their time in the general education classroom. An amendment to increase the multiplier to 1.07 and remove the 13.5% limit wasn't adopted.

- Increase prototypical school funding to Initiative 1351 levels to improve student well-being:
 - The House operating budget would fund increased guidance counselor ratios for 20 schools. The Senate does not have a similar approach. No additional action.
- Lower the High-Poverty LAP threshold to the state annual average of free or reduced-price meal-eligible students to increase services to more students: No bills are still alive.

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

Bellevue PTSA Council parent Jessica Smiddy testified on behalf of Washington State PTA Monday, April 9 in favor of the school meals demonstration bill, HB 1272. Jessica was joined by Vancouver parent Caressa Milgrove, and several other speakers who all spoke in favor of the legislation. Despite the comments in favor and long list of supporters signed in Pro but not testifying, the bill did not secure enough signatures to move out of the Senate Ways & Means Committee. WSPTA is working with the bill sponsor Rep. My-Linh Thai, D-Bellevue, and other proponent organizations on solutions to move the pilot sites forward. Here’s the [short testimony, plus interaction with committee members](#).

The Week Ahead

Floor action only – April 17th 5 PM is the deadline for bills to pass out of the opposite chamber.

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