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Cutoff week expected to be a busy one

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This week is expected to be quite busy, as policy committees schedule bills for public hearings and votes in advance of the February 15 deadline for bills to be out of policy committees. Friday marks the last day for House and Senate committees that don't meet on the 15th. An exception will be made in the House for committees that need that extra day to complete business. Bills with a fiscal impact above \$50,000 are sent to Appropriations and Capital Budget in the House, and Ways & Means in the Senate. Bills without a fiscal impact are sent to the Rules Committee, the gatekeeper to the floor.

Early action initiatives

- [SSB 5128](#), the transportation funding fix bill, has been stalled in the Senate Ways & Means Committee, but is now scheduled for a vote on February 11. The bill would offer an alternative student transportation allocation formula and would allow expanded transportation services when a school district is providing remote instruction during certain local, state, and national emergencies. In addition, the bill would allow school districts to apply for additional funding if they exceed their allocation amount due to providing expanded services, as originally allowed under the Governor's proclamation.
- [EHB 1121](#) would give the State Board of Education (SBE) the authority to offer high school credit waivers in times of emergencies – both from a statewide level or in regions or more localized catastrophic events. The bill had a positive public hearing in the Senate education committee and has been scheduled for a vote on Monday, February 8.
- [HB 1476](#) is the enrollment stabilization bill we've been waiting for. The bill has been scheduled for a public hearing Tuesday, February 9, at 3:30 PM in House Appropriations.

WSPTA Legislative Priorities

(all bills may be accessed [here](#))

Washington State PTA adopts a [two-year platform](#). Delegates at the 2020 Legislative Assembly adopted five issues as the highest priority issues, and three as "Also Supported." [Videos](#) and handouts for members' use in advocacy efforts this session are posted on the WSPTA Advocacy [page](#) under each position statement.

Last week again was a busy week for WSPTA members testifying. Here's a look at advocacy in action:

- Sharing her personal experience with youth suicide, WSPTA member Melissa Kline spoke in favor of [HB 1354](#), a bill that would create a Washington Youth Suicide Review Team to review the circumstances related to suicides occurring among youth up to age

24. Kline asked the House Children, Youth & Families Committee to consider an amendment to include access to lethal means, such as firearms, as part of the in-depth study. Listen [here](#). WSPTA will be following up with the amendment request.

- The pandemic exposed what many parents and students already knew – that digital equity was not universal across our state and school districts. [Speaking in favor](#) of HB 1450, Northshore parent Nancy Chamberlain asked House Education Committee members to think of computers and digital devices like books – they are today’s basic education, said Chamberlain. She encouraged them to consider an increase to MSOC which has a per student technology allocation that could be increased. With only 60 seconds to speak, WSPTA will submit written comments as well.
- Tanya Aggar, a parent in the 41st legislative district, testified before the House Education Committee February 2, asking members to pass HB 1373 and to add an amendment to include a website for safe storage of firearms. The bill would direct school districts to make several national mental health webpages available on the school district website. Listen [here](#).
- Sharing WSPTA’s [digital equity position](#) adopted last October at the Legislative Assembly, Nancy Chamberlain addressed the Senate Environment, Energy & Technology Committee February 3 on SB 5383, a bill that would authorize public utilities and ports with retail sales for broadband, but only after a private company does not object to the expansion project. Chamberlain stated WSPTA’s position and shared some concerns with the limits of the bill. Listen [here](#).
- HB 1302 would allow 9th graders to earn college credit for taking a College in the High School course. Currently, 9th graders may take the course but aren’t eligible to earn college credit. This bill would change this. After reviewing, WSPTA decided to ask for two amendments to strengthen the bill regarding notification, clear guidance in the course catalogue, and how to get the college credit. [Hear](#) WSPTA Advocacy Committee member Natalya Yudkovski testify in the House Education Committee.

The Week Ahead

(Schedule subject to change, all bills can be founded through this [link](#))

Week 5 of the 15-week session will be full of lots of committee action, and we’ll be paying close attention to executive sessions and possible amendments. Please use the WSPTA bill tracker which includes the list of all of the public hearings and executive sessions for the week of February 8-12. WSPTA is scheduled to testify nearly every day next week, so watch for more information about our Focus on Advocacy in the WSPTA blog. If you are interested in testifying for WSPTA, please reach out to Sherry Rudolph, Advocacy Director, at PTAadvocacydir@wastatepta.org.