

Legislative Update LWVIN Education Advocate

Senate Bill 12 Materials harmful to minors. Assigned to the House Education, not scheduled. This bill opens teachers and librarians to criminal prosecution over materials evaluation of “harmful to minors.” This bill removes existing legal defenses that currently protect schools and libraries from such litigation. It puts in place a process for parents or patrons to object to materials and requires schools to post online all books in the school library.

Response: There are regulations and procedures already in place in school libraries, schools, and public libraries to vet materials. If a parent or patron presents an objection, there are procedures in place in schools and libraries requiring a re-evaluation to determine if a legitimate objection to the material has been raised. This bill creates unnecessary controversy and conflict. Pornography is not in our public schools that is misinformation. Legislation like SB 12 is a threat to access, creates controversy where there is none, elevates the preferences of some parents above others, and makes dedicated librarians and teachers targets.

Senate Bill 480 Gender transition procedures. Assigned to the House Public Health, heard 3/21 and passed. Headed to the full House. SB 480 impacts the medical treatment of transgender youth and will impact the education of transgender youth. SB 480 prohibits physicians from providing medical treatment to transgender youth, even when supported by parents, before the age of 18.

Response: SB 480 ignores the recommendations of medical professionals and experts. This bill bans nearly all forms of science-based medical care recommended for transgender youth, taking from doctors their ability to prescribe approved life-saving care. SB 480 goes against the medical advice of every major medical association in the country and violates the rights of parents and families to make decisions about their children’s health. This bill is based on misinformation, not fact. It is a dangerous overreach of authority and directly threatens the well-being of young people by withholding treatment.

SB 391 Closure of school buildings. Assigned to House Education, not scheduled.

Establishes standards concerning when a school corporation must close an underutilized school building. Provides procedures for notifying charter school and state educational institutions through the department of education of the availability of a closed school building. The bill expands the requirement that school corporations must make available for sale any building that is not utilized at 60% capacity to Charters for \$1.00.

Response: SB 391 FORCES school corporations to offer up to Charters any buildings that are not being fully utilized for \$1.00 or have their funding withheld. This bill dictates that any school buildings built with taxpayer dollars must be given to Charters without compensation or face losing state funds. Public buildings are paid for with public dollars and belong in public hands. Taking school buildings away from communities paid for by them is wrong.

HB 486 Education matters. Assigned to the House Education, not scheduled. SB 486 eliminates various required teacher trainings, including criminal gang awareness, identifying and reporting human trafficking, and recognizing seizures. It also removes from administrators the requirement of discussing working conditions with teachers, such as class size, student discipline, student teacher ratios, etc. Teachers are retiring and resigning in mass, the problem is not just money, but being heard and respected. This bill is a great example of what should not happen.

Response: SB 486 does not make teachers' working conditions better. The legislators promoting this bill falsely claim this is pro-teacher legislation because it eliminates unnecessary trainings, a decision that is best made at the local level. But, the hidden harm of this bill is that it takes from teachers the right to discuss with administration important issues that impact the teaching and learning environment for students. We oppose rescinding the current law that requires the school administration to discuss working conditions with teachers. Disempowering teachers by ending the

requirement to discuss issues that impact their working conditions is not beneficial to the teacher/student learning environment, and is bound to exacerbate the state's shortage of qualified teachers.

HB 1002 Education and workforce matter. Assigned to the Senate Education, not scheduled. HB 1002 is a new form of school vouchers, creating Career Scholarship Accounts (CSAs). CSAs would use school funding to provide a voucher to students who want to pursue work experiences with private companies. This bill advances the privatization of education and there are many remaining questions on how the program would work.

Response: This bill takes money from public education and students are required as freshman to commitment to workforce study for their high school career path.

HB 1608 Sexual Education. Assigned to Senate Education, scheduled to be heard and voted upon 3/22 at 1:30. HB 1608 would censor discussion about LGBTQ people in schools under the guise of parental rights. Additionally, it bars school personnel from using a name, pronoun, etc. to identify a student if not consistent with the child's sex indicated on the birth certificate without written request from the parent at the beginning of the school year. It mandates that parents be notified if a child requests to be identified by an alternative name or pronoun. Teachers who refuse to use the name or pronouns as requested by the parent cannot be punished by administration.

Response: Schools should care equally for ALL students. This bill would force a teacher to choose between responding with understanding and sensitivity to the needs of LGBTQ or transgender youth or concede to this law. If a teacher acknowledges and honors the student identity without written notification of the parent, the teacher would be violating SB 1608. This is harmful legislation that would impact student/teacher relationships and targets the most vulnerable students by perpetuating the misunderstandings surrounding LGBTQ and the trans-population.

House Bill 1177 Handgun training for teachers. Assigned to the Senate Education, not yet scheduled. This bill allows school safety funds to be spent on 40 hours of handgun training for teachers.

Response: HB 1177 is bad policy and does not increase school security when safety funds are invested to train teachers to shoot a handgun instead of invested in long-term legitimate safety infrastructure, like secure and reinforced entries, classroom barriers, locking systems, and the employment of safety officers. Teachers should not become trained police officers and having guns on a school campus increases the likelihood of accidents that could make teachers liable.

The budget, HB 1001, is before the Senate Appropriations Committee. Below are details being reported.

- Increase spending on private school vouchers by 70% (\$1.1 billion) going to approximately 7% of Indiana's students.
- 5% increase for traditional public schools where approximately 90% of Hoosier kids attend public schools
- Raise the voucher family income level allowing more families with wealth to qualify for vouchers.
- Textbooks fees no longer paid by families; however, no money is being allocated. Instead, the cost would be shifted to school districts to cover in their budgets.

Response: Fully fund public schools. Increase funds for textbooks and complexity. Do not raise the family income cap on vouchers. The intent of vouchers was about helping those who could not afford school choice to be able access a nonpublic school option. Charter schools operations funding should not be increased at the expense of traditional public schools. Increasing

To better understand the impact of vouchers on public schools please read. "Five Years of Voucher-Mapped by District" <https://www.indianacoalitionforpubliced.org/2023/03/15/five-years-of-vouchers-mapped-by-district/> and "Budget Reflects Priorities-Leaky Bucket of School

Funding”<https://www.indianacoalitionforpubliced.org/2023/03/03/budget-reflects-priorities-the-leaky-bucket/>

“Good” bills to support.

HB 1449 Twenty-first Century Scholarship. Passed Senate Education and assigned to Senate Appropriations. HB 1449 automatically enrolls eligible students.

HB 1037 Enforcement of Equal Education Opportunity. Assigned to Senate Education, not scheduled. Prohibits discrimination based on religion.

HB 1483 Prohibiting Bullying in schools. Assigned to Senate Education, not scheduled. Schools are required to intervene and provide support to child being bullied.

SB 340 Imagination library. Passed House Education and assigned to Ways and Means, not scheduled. This program is best known as Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library. Free books are provided monthly to qualifying homes with preschool children.

HB 1637 Teacher education programs. Assigned to Senate Education, not scheduled. This bill would increase scholarship amounts for students studying to become educators, particularly students of color. It would increase the William Crawford Minority Teachers scholarship from \$7,500 to \$10,000 and the Earline S. Rogers student teaching scholarship from \$4,000 to \$5,000. The bill would also establish the Next Generation Hoosier Minority Educators Scholarship Program and Fund.

DEAD. House Bill 1428 School board elections. A bill that would have let Hoosier communities decide if local school board elections should be partisan **died in the Indiana House.** That means school board races will stay non-partisan — at least for now. Language from the bill could still crop up in others before the end of the current legislative session.

Gallup Poll--what parents think about their child’s school.

<https://indianacapitalchronicle.com/2023/02/06/new-statewide-poll-shows-most-indiana-parents-satisfied-with-schools-classroom-curricula/>