

NEA-NH Legislative Update 01.28.22

Week's Wrap-up

This past week we had dozens more hearings on a variety of bill topics, focusing on aspects surrounding charter schools, special education, and other topics. The House Education Committee also began voting on recommendations on bills they had heard from the past couple of weeks. Here are some the highlights from this week:

Anti-Mask Bills Postponed

After receiving word that the 2 anti-mask bills (HB 1131 and HB 1371) previously scheduled for last week, would be generating significant turnout, even from organizations flying people in for these, the House Education chair decided to postpone them so that adequate space and preparation could be arranged for just such a hearing. We expect the follow up hearings for these bills to be sometime later in February or early March so please stay tuned. As a reminder, these bills seek to prevent the requirement of mask wearing to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in K-12 public schools.

Restrictions on Civil Rights Instruction Voted on in Committee

HB 1632 is a bill which espouses how to teach the civil rights era, but in a veiled way is seeking a similar outcome to the teacher loyalty bill. The House Education committee voted to recommend "Interim Study" for the bill by a vote of 10-9. If the full House adopts this recommendation, it will mean that the committee would look at it again over the summer and make a recommendation as to whether it deserves consideration for future legislation. While Interim Study would not be a negative vote on the bill, the good news is, this action would effectively do away with it this year and a new bill would need to be brought forward in 2023 if they wanted to move forward. Some often refer to Interim Study as the nice way to kill a piece of legislation in the second year of the session. Again, the full House will still need to vote on this recommendation at their next session, so it is not done yet.

Dissolution of Cooperative School Districts Hearing

NEA-NH submitted testimony in opposition to HB 1679 at its public hearing this week. The proposed legislation would require cooperative school districts to review and adopt dissolution plans before January 1st of 2024 and then dissolves all cooperative districts by June 30, 2025. The bill had more than 1,000 people sign in against it and the only person who spoke in favor of

the bill was one of the co-sponsors. This legislation could mean a substantial increase in cost to localities who want to make sure their children have a high-quality public education, but for financial reasons, would find it extremely difficult to do so on its own.

Major bills still awaiting committee votes – visit our legislative action page for what to do next!

While the House Education committee voted on more than a dozen bills this week, there are many pieces of legislation they have held a hearing on that still are awaiting votes. You can find these key piece of legislation on the Take Action portion of our website [here](#), which will enable you to call or write the relevant committee members your position on a bill. The list of legislation includes the Teacher Loyalty bill, Objectionable Materials, and expanding the banned concepts law to higher education, just to name a few.

Next Week's Hearings

Next week's public hearings focus on legislation to repeal or curb the current school voucher law, repeal banned concepts law, and many others. Here are the ones we are suggesting deserving the most focus:

SB 432 and HB 1683– Repealing the Education Freedom Account Program

These bills would repeal the state voucher program passed through the budget process last year. The program as many know has gone more the 6,000% over budget and has a litany of accountability shortcomings and is being allocated mostly to private and religious schools. The program attempts to fund this separate education system while we still have not adequately funded the one that serves nearly 90% of students, our neighborhood public schools.

ACTION REQUESTED: Please Sign-in, or write to the Senate Education Committee in SUPPORT of SB 432 bill: <http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/remotecommittee/senate.aspx>

And to the House Education Committee in SUPPORT of **HB 1683:**
<http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/house/committees/remotetestimony/default.aspx>

SB 298 – Repealing the Banned Concepts Law

This legislation is a straight repeal of the Banned Concepts law that has chilled crucial discourse in classrooms through its vagueness and high stakes consequences for educators. The current law has led NEA-NH and others to file a lawsuit in federal court against this law, but the

legislature should act now by repealing it. This senate bill was filed in addition to the bill heard a few weeks ago, SB 304 which was a repeal and replace bill.

ACTION REQUESTED: Please Sign-in, or write to the Senate Judiciary Committee in SUPPORT of this piece of legislation: <http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/remotecommittee/senate.aspx>

House – Voucher Week

Over in the House there are numerous bills being heard that would, make changes to, or repeal some of the most egregious components of the state’s private and religious school voucher law. You can sign in on these bills by going to the House Sign-in website [here](#).

Here are the ones we will be watching especially:

HB 1637 – requires parents of a public-school students switching to the voucher program to submit a survey designed to ascertain the reasons for the parents' election to remove the student from the public school system and the parents' perceived benefits of utilizing an education freedom account.

Public Hearing: 2/2/2022 at 11:30 a.m. **Location: Legislative Office Building Time: 11:30 a.m.**

HB 1670 - requires that upon enrolling in a public school an education freedom account program student's participation and funding are terminated. The bill also requires audits by the scholarship organization and investigation of misuses of funds. This is more financial accountability sorely missing in this program.

2/2/2022 at 2:00 p.m. **Location: Legislative Office Building Time: 2:00 p.m.**

HB 1669 - This bill changes the administration of the education freedom account program under from the private “scholarship organization” entity to the Department of Education and keeps public dollars under a public entity.

2/2/2022 at 2:30 p.m. **Location: Legislative Office Building Time: 2:30 p.m.**

HB 1664 – requires nonpublic schools and education service providers that accept public funds to comply with requirements for criminal history background checks for employees and volunteers. Currently, there is no requirement for these providers and the DOE has not required a negative background check in their rule writing either.

2/3/2022 at 9:00 a.m. **Location: Legislative Office Building Time: 9:00 a.m.**

HB 1607 - requires the state board of education to ensure there is no unlawful discrimination in any approved school tuition program, public school, nonpublic school, or educational service provider that receives public funds.

2/4/2022 at 9:30 a.m. **Location: Legislative Office Building Time: 9:30 a.m.**

The Other Mask Bills that Happen Next Week

Different from the 2 bills postponed earlier this week, there are several bills NEA-NH opposes that would restrict mitigation efforts by our workplaces, whether they be K-12 schools or postsecondary institutions.

HB 1588 – This bill allows students in a school that has mandated face masks to transfer to a school or program in another school district or voucher program and have the costs for such transfer paid by the resident district.

ACTION REQUESTED: Please Sign-in, or write to the House Education committee in OPPOSITION

Public Hearing: 2/3/2022 at 2:15 p.m. **Location: Legislative Office Building Time: 2:15 p.m.**

HB 1233 – This bill prohibits higher education institutions from requiring a COVID-19 vaccination or face masks for enrollment or attendance.

ACTION REQUESTED: Please Sign-in, or write to the House Education Committee in OPPOSITION

2/2/2022 at 9:45 a.m. **Location: Legislative Office Building Time: 9:45 a.m.**

HB1224 – This legislation prohibits state or local government agencies from requiring masks or other facial coverings in response to COVID-19 or other infectious diseases. It also prohibits state or local government agencies from issuing immunity passports or similar standardized documentation of COVID-19 vaccination status, prohibits businesses from requiring documentation of COVID-19 vaccination status, and prohibits discrimination on the basis of COVID-19 vaccination status by state agencies, employers, and places of public accommodation.

ACTION REQUESTED: Please Sign-in, or write to the House Health and Human Services committee in OPPOSITION to this bill

Public Hearing: 2/1/2022 at 9:30 a.m. **Location: Legislative Office Building Time: 9:30 a.m.**

Questions?

If you have questions on any of these bills or ones not mentioned here, please feel free to contact Brian Hawkins, NEA-NH Director of Government Relations at bhawkins@nhnea.org.