

DKG Under the Gold Dome

A Weekly Publication to Keep You Informed

TO: All GSO Sisters
FROM: Laura Croom,
Chair, GSO Educational Law & Policy Committee
RE: Legislative Update
DATE: February 26, 2022



Get Your Seats Early

There were some controversial bills heard in Committee this week including **HB 1084** (“Divisive Concepts”), **HB 1178** (Parental Bill of Rights), and **SB 514** (“Unmask Students Act”). In particular, **HB 1084**, one of the most important and impactful education discussions occurring in Georgia in decades, was held in one of the smallest rooms, and people either had to sit on the floor or couldn’t get in the room at all.

Rep. Will Wade’s **HB 1084**, the “divisive concepts” bill templated from similar bills passing across the nation, passed the committee by a vote of 13-7, and the just as controversial “Parents Bill of Rights” passed 13-6. A tremendous amount of discourse and valuable time was spent on these two bills in committee meetings, and one must wonder if either will make any serious positive impact on the way we do school for children.

One interesting question to ponder regarding the **HB 1084** discussion in committee: Would it be legal for students in Georgia classrooms next year to have the same critical-thinking debate that the legislators in committee had this week if this bill passes into law next year? We suspect that the authors might say “technically” YES, as long as teachers don’t take a side, but our fear is that the parents filing complaints against individual teachers and schools for full investigations next year will feel differently.

On another note, the debate this week in Senate Education and Youth over the mask prohibition bill made for good TV streaming, full of drama, conflict, and sound bites, but it was discouraging.

Members of the committee took each other on, and the presenter of the bill plainly did not have answers from some of the pressing questions such as “Was Dr. Kathleen Toomey, the state public health director, consulted on the bill?” He could not say for certain.

The chair of the committee elected not to receive public testimony on the bill related to public health, even though over fifteen people were present to testify. The bill passed committee 7-5.

Teacher Return to Work Clears Another Hurdle

HB 385, giving teachers in critical-shortage fields the opportunity to return to teaching full time and continue to earn TRS benefits so that our students could have better access to highly qualified and experienced teachers, crossed another hurdle this week. **The bill passed out of Senate Retirement with a DO PASS and now goes to Senate Rules.**

This is part of Governor Kemp’s “Teacher Pipeline Package,” and we are grateful that the Governor’s office and key legislators (especially in the House) have gotten behind the idea that teachers returning to work is not about the adults, it’s about the kids. If we have a teacher shortage, we need to do whatever it takes to get more of them in the classroom so that children get the expertise they deserve and need for their futures.

New Bills and Bills Activated This Week (*Bill lookup:* <https://www.legis.ga.gov/>)

- **HB 1415** (Ehrhart): Rules and procedures for accrediting agencies. **Assigned to House Education.**
- **SB 530** (Jackson): Modifies waiver requirement for flexibility selection. **Assigned to Senate Education and Youth.**
- **SB 541** (Anavitarte): Requires that GADOE establish procedures for dealing with epileptic and seizure disorder students. **Assigned to Education and Youth.**
- **SB 545** (Halpern): Requires training on defibrillator as a part of health course. **Assigned to Education and Youth.**

Bills in Committee This Week

- **HB 385** (Blackmon): Retired teachers return to work. **Heard in Senate Retirement, DO PASS, on to Senate Rules.**
- **HB 646** (Glanton): Technology pathways for dual enrollment. **Hearing only in House Higher Education.**
- **HB 751** (Jasperse): Pay as you earn student loan program. **Hearing only in House Higher Education.**
- **HB 820** (Mitchell, R): Revises value of HOPE scholarship. **Hearing only in House Higher Education.**
- **HB 932** (Cantrell): Grants in-state tuition status to certain refugees. **Hearing only in House Higher Education.**
- **HB 1043** (Jasperse): Creates Georgia Endowment for Teaching Professionals. **Hearing only in House Higher Education.**
- **HB 1084** (Wade): Governor’s bill prohibiting “divisive” curricula. **Given a DO PASS by House Education with a vote of 13-7.**
- **HB 1178** (Bonner): Governor’s parental rights bill. **Given a DO PASS by House Education on Wednesday. Vote was 13-6.**
- **HB 1292** (Jasperse): Students participating in 4-H activities counted present at school. **DO PASS from House Education.**
- **HB 1295** (Corbett): Removes “needs development” rating from PSC and salary schedule consequences. **Given a DO PASS by Education Support Subcommittee and full Education Committee. Recommitted to Education Committee on Tuesday.**
- **HB 1303** (Dickey): Established pilot program for elementary agriculture education. **DO PASS by House Education on Wednesday.**
- **HB 1319** (Werkheiser): Creates law enforcement scholarship. **Hearing only in House Higher Education.**
- **SB 357** (Kirkpatrick): Permits military students to select adjacent districts for attendance.
- **SB 452** (McNeill): Requires a national college entrance exam be provided free of charge if student request is made. **Hearing only in Senate Education and Youth.**
- **SB 508:** Establishes performance and participation targets for dual enrollment. **Hearing only in Senate Higher Education on Tuesday.**
- **SB 514** (Dixon): Prohibits mask requirements. **DO PASS by Senate Education and Youth. No public input was permitted.**

Bills Adopted by House or Senate

- **HB 1215** (Thomas, B): Eliminates funding restriction on virtual charter schools and prohibits local rules that prevent a student from transferring to a charter school after the beginning of the year. **ADOPTED by House on Thursday.**
- **HB 1217** (Erwin): Updates student technology protection practices. **ADOPTED by House on Thursday.**
- **SB 397**: Updates GED terminology to HSE. **ADOPTED by Senate.**
- **SB 435** (Harbin): Prevents transgender female participation in high school sports. **ADOPTED by Senate by a vote of 34-22.**
- **SB 449** (Dixon): Parents Bill of Rights (Governor's bill). **ADOPTED by Senate on a 33-21 party line vote.**

Next Week

The General Assembly will be in session Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday of next week. Wednesday is a committee workday.

ALERT

It is that time in the General Assembly when things get done in a hurry. One tactic is to hold those bills and announce them for committee action at the very last minute, making it difficult for input. Please know that we will get the critical information to you as quickly as possible, but it may be at the last moment. Be prepared to email and call your legislators.