

# 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:** March 12, 2022



## Political Expediency Does Not Equal Fairness or Good Governance

Something is changing in the way Georgia governance works in the Georgia General Assembly. We realize we will not always agree with our Representatives and Senators, but there is an unwritten rule that principles of inclusive governance and transparency should apply equally to all levels of state government. But maybe that rule only applies to educators and local boards.

This year, in our opinion, it has become clear that standards imposed by the Legislature on local boards and school systems DO NOT apply to legislative committees. While the Legislature has increasingly applied directives requiring local boards of education to allow public comment and give proper notice to the public, we are seeing “different rules” from some in our state legislature who want your vote in May and November.

Case in point:

This week in the Education and Youth Committee meeting on Tuesday, SB 601 was on the agenda, proposed by Senate President Pro Temp Butch Miller, a candidate for Lt. Governor. It establishes a third private school voucher program for the state of Georgia with huge consequences for tax dollars and education in Georgia. When Sen. Miller finished his presentation there were several pointed questions directed at him by the committee. Following that questioning, the chair of the committee chose to announce that there would be no public testimony on the legislation, even though several people had signed up to speak on the bill. He then called for the vote and the voucher bill was given a DO PASS by a vote of 6-4.

To be clear, public stakeholders on both sides of the voucher issue drove hours to the Gold Dome to testify on the bill two days in a row, but they were told they would not be allowed to testify, not even to propose ways the bill could improve or ways the bill might hurt Georgians.

Other than Democratic Senator Elena Parent’s objections that people did not get to testify on such a consequential bill and her motion to table it, every single Republican senator who was present (Lindsey Tippins and Matt Brass were absent) and Democratic Senator Donzella James voted against the motion to table it so that people could testify, and the same senators voted DO PASS to send it to Senate Rules for a floor vote. In our opinion, ramming it through the committee without public comment and with very little notice to the public is a frightening portent of how elected officials running for office might presume to govern us in the future. You have a right to expect transparent and inclusive governance and to fairly share your concerns with your elected

officials. Even if you believe in vouchers, it is our opinion that the process used this week was not good for Georgia, and in our opinion, was a blatant breach of good faith and inclusive governance.

## The Dark Hour Cometh

All bills had to exit their committees by the end of the day on March 10. Bills not receiving a DO PASS are considered dead. There will be no opportunity to revisit them later. All bills must exit their respective chamber by the end of the day on March 15 – Crossover Day. There are many bills that have not received a hearing but that are at the discretion of the chair of the committee to which they have been assigned.

Fear not, there are tricks available to legislators.

One trick is to take a bill that has exited its chamber and add another bill to it. Several pieces of legislation have passed over the years that had two (and sometimes even more) very different sections that were tagged on in the other chamber. Perhaps the most difficult maneuver to accept is when a bill is “stripped,” removing all the language of the initial bill, and replacing it with new or different legislation.

## New Bills and Bills Activated This Week

(Bill lookup: <https://www.legis.ga.gov/>)

- **HB 1482** (Erwin): Revision of low-wealth capital outlay requirements. Assigned to Education.
- **HB 1513** (Mainor): Creates non-profit organization to replace GHSA. Identical to SB 328 introduced by Jeff Mullis. Assigned to Education.
- **HB 1515** (Bentley): Permits Transnational Association of Christian Colleges (Morris Brown College and Paine College) to receive HOPE equalization funds. Assigned to Higher Education.
- **HB 1544** (Evans): Revises definition of a qualified institution to need-based scholarships. Assigned to Education.
- **HB 1554** (Sainz): Requires public health to administer a survey on wellness of children. Assigned to Education.
- **SB 588** (Miller): Provides limitations on removing stakeholders from a local board of education meeting and provides stipulations on recording a meeting. This is no change in the law; it is an election year ploy. Assigned to Education and Youth.
- **SB 589** (Dolezal): Established student account for private school (voucher). Similar to HB 60 that did not move in House. Assigned to Education and Youth.
- **SB 601** (Miller): Creates \$6,000 promise scholarship for private school (voucher). Election year ploy. Assigned to Education and Youth. **Contact your SENATOR NOW.**
- **SB 603** (Rahman): Creates pilot program for outdoor learning space. Assigned to Education and Youth.
- **SB 613** (Summers): Requires equal treatment of public and private schools regarding “divisive” and other curricula. Assigned to Education and Youth.

## Bills in Committee This Week

- **SB 498** (Tippins): Recognition of accrediting agencies by State Board of Education. DO PASS in Education and Youth.
- **SB 603** (Rahman): Creates pilot program for outdoor learning space. DO PASS in Education and Youth.

- **SB 545** (Halpern): Modifies health course to include first aid and use of defibrillator. DO PASS in Education and Youth.
- **SB 575** (Tippins): Local Board of Education required to review financials quarterly rather than monthly. DO PASS in Senate and Youth.
- **SB 328** (Mullis): Create non-profit replacement for GHSA. DO PASS in Education and Youth.
- **SB 377** (Hatchett): Prohibits “divisive” materials but excludes post-secondary and does not include a financial penalty to public schools. DO PASS in Education and Youth.
- **SB 588** (Miller): Opens all Board meetings to public except for Executive Session. DO PASS in Education and Youth.
- **SB 601** (Miller): \$6,000 Promise Scholarship (voucher) for private school. DO PASS in Education and Youth.
- **HB 1184** (Williams, Al): Requires a national college entrance exam be given to all 11<sup>th</sup> graders (optional). DO PASS in House Education.
- **HB 1283** (Douglas): Mandatory recess for grades K-5. DO PASS in Education.
- **HB 1435** (Martin, C.): Financial aid for students in financial aid gap. DO PASS in House Higher Education.
- **HB 1474** (Mainor): Creates a course on career readiness in grades 6-12. DO PASS in Education.
- **HB 1482** (Erwin): Revises low-wealth capital outlay requirements. DO PASS in Education.
- **HB 1515** (Bentley): Permits Transnational Association of Christian Colleges (Morris Brown College and Paine College) to receive HOPE equalization funds. DO PASS in Higher Education.

### **Bills Adopted by House or Senate**

- **HB 1319** (Werkheiser): Creates law enforcement scholarship/forgivable loan for law enforcement. Goes to Senate.
- **HB 1043** (Jasperse): Creates Georgia Endowment for Teaching Professionals. Goes to Senate.
- **HB 1295** (Corbett): Removes “needs development” rating from TKES and LKES reporting to the GAPSC and removes salary scale consequences for rating. Goes to Senate.
- **HB 1357** (Smith, TP): Establishes procedures for out-of-state public and private schools’ credit to be used for certification. Goes to Senate.
- **SB 333** (Albers): Updates higher education rules and policies. Goes to House.
- **SB 357** (Kirkpatrick): Permits military children to select adjacent school districts for attendance. On March 11 Senate Calendar.
- **SB 377** (Hatchett): Prohibits “divisive” curricula but removes post-secondary and eliminates financial penalties. On March 11 Senate Calendar.
- **SB 603** (Rahman): Creates pilot program for outdoor learning space. On March 11 Senate Calendar.

### **Next Week**

The General Assembly will be in session Tuesday (Crossover Day), Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday of next week.



## ALERT FOR ACTION!



**Contact your LOCAL SENATOR NOW!** (Yes, like, this evening!). Find his/her contact information here: [https://openstates.org/find\\_your\\_legislator/](https://openstates.org/find_your_legislator/)

Tell him/her your feelings about expanding private school vouchers with very little accountability to the voters for how your tax dollars are used.

Two bills are up for Senate VOTE:

- **HB 517** – Doubles cap of tax credit voucher to \$200 million over next 5 years. The Department of Audits has expressed concerns about this program, but to date the Legislature has done nothing to address them. You can read the audit report here: [https://www.audits.ga.gov/PAO/20-12\\_QEEC-SSP.html](https://www.audits.ga.gov/PAO/20-12_QEEC-SSP.html)
- **SB 601** – Creates third private school voucher scholarship of \$6,000 with no income requirements for parents. Affluent parents can spend unused funds on their children’s college tuition. Private schools do not have to post their individual audits/budgets to the public.

Do you have feelings about how the Senate Education & Youth Committee handled SB 601 this week? Let the Senate committee members know by emailing them. Remember, be polite, respectful, and positive in sharing your concerns. Don’t make it easy for them to “dismiss” you because you were perceived as rude, throwing rocks, or sending character attacks. Focus on the process they used, not their personal motivations. We want them to see us as partners, but they owe it to you to allow you to share concerns. Rather than throw rocks, perhaps you begin your email (using your personal email account) with:

Dear Senate Education Committee Members,

My name is [insert name], and I serve as [role]. I am also a [parent, taxpayer, voter, etc.]. First, I want to thank you for your service. Being a legislator is not always easy. With that said, I feel [insert your feeling] about the process that was used this week to vote out SB 601 without giving people a chance to testify or submit written feedback. [Insert how you feel governance should work instead.]

[Insert your commitment to proudly serving children and ask them to be partners in the process in whatever way you feel is correct.]

[Thank them again. Be respectful and show them why educators are a “class act.”]

Sincerely,

[Insert name]