

# FEA Frontline Report

## 2020 Legislative Session

Week 7 – Day 46

February 28, 2020

### *Leap Year – Leaps and bounds*

Happy Leap Year Day (tomorrow)! The Legislature may not be working on Leap Day, but they are certainly moving by leaps and bounds towards the end of session. We were on budget watch this week but alas, no allocations were announced which means no conferees and no conference either. We're still waiting to see when the Speaker and the Senate President will come to an agreement and conference can begin. Until then, keep [making your calls and sending emails](#) urging YOUR Senator and YOUR Representative to say no to failed bonuses and to ensure any salary funding proposal is for all educators including veteran and prekindergarten teachers, bus drivers and paraprofessionals.

### *Take Action*

HB 1 – the union busting bill that would force members to reauthorize their union membership annually and require the employer to verify that someone who signed a dues deduction form actually wants to be a union member – is scheduled to be heard by the full House on **Tuesday, March 3<sup>rd</sup>**. Please take a moment to email [your Representative](#) and urge them to **OPPOSE HB 1**.

When emailing [your Representative](#), here's some sample message points you can share:

- HB 1 is unnecessary. Florida is a right to work state. Workers NEVER have to join their union. It is their choice to join or not. And, they can cancel their membership at any time for any reason.
- The bill places an undue burden on the employer as well as the employee. Once the employer receives a signed dues authorization, the employer must "confirm with the employee, electronically or by other means, that he or she authorized the deduction of dues and uniform assessments." This puts the employer in charge of the dues authorization process for the first time in history.
- HB 1 will create delays and cost taxpayers' money. The employer and the employee organization will hold the burden of unnecessary and duplicative paperwork, stealing time from the real work of the agency.

### *Bills*

#### ***Voucher Expansion***

This week both [SB 1220](#) and [HB 7067](#) were heard in committee and passed by a party-line vote. We thank the democrats on the Senate [Appropriations Subcommittee on Education](#) and the House [Appropriations Committee](#) who spoke up and stood against the latest expansion of vouchers. These bills expand the Florida Empowerment voucher which takes funds directly out of the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP), removing vital funding from our neighborhood public schools in order to support unaccountable for-profit and religious institutions.

SB 1220 and HB 7067 differ. SB 1220 by Senator Manny Diaz (R-Hialeah) would require an automatic escalator of eligible students by 28,000 each year. This would more than triple the funding taken from traditional public schools in the next two years and raise the income limits to 260% the federal poverty level – an increase of over 40%.

HB 7067 by Rep. Jennifer Sullivan (R-Mount Dora) is even more aggressive in siphoning students from our traditional public schools. The bill requires automatic increases for when there is and is not a waiting list. Talk about a sweet deal for these private schools and the Scholarship Funding Organizations (SFO) that get to keep 3% of over one billion (yes billion) in taxpayer dollars they are given to distribute. If that wasn't enough, the legislature is weakening accountability by reducing annual audits of the very same SFO's that manage the billion dollars, to once every three years.

Now if we had some evidence that these private voucher programs were better than our neighborhood public schools then maybe we'd accept less accountability and more vouchers. But alas, that's simply not the case. These voucher

programs are a revolving door of students. 37% of students receiving vouchers leave their private school within one year, and more than half leave within two years. The majority return to public schools worse off than when they left. The irony is that this is all done under the label of “choice” where first come, first served funding and the private school selection process gives all the power of “choice” to the school, not the parent. So much for transparency and fiscal responsibility...

**FRS**

The legislature has proposed changes to the Florida Retirement System (FRS) which, if passed into law, will cost school districts approximately \$233 million in additional costs. Districts have one flexible source of funding to cover these fixed costs, the Base Student Allocation (BSA), which must also cover increased student costs, rising health care costs, etc. For context, school district employees make up about 49% of the active membership in the FRS. The table below may help explain the proposed changes from current year costs and the proposed rates for the coming fiscal year. While the 3% *employee* contribution remains the same, the *employer* costs rise 1.53% - from 8.47% to 10%. This analysis will be true if the associated rate bills pass and the legislature takes no further actions to ameliorate the increase.

	2019-2020 Rates	2020-2021 Recommended Rates
Employee Contribution	• 3%	• 3%
Employer Contribution		
• Normal Rate	• 3.19%	• 4.84%
• UAL Rate	• 3.56%	• 3.44%
• IP Fee	• .06%	• .06%
• HIS Contribution	• 1.66%	• 1.66%
Total Employer Contribution	• 8.47%	• 10.00%

**Seclusion and Restraint – cameras in classrooms**

You might have heard about a bill moving through the legislature that proposes putting video cameras in classrooms. This session a new provision in [HB 1231](#) and [SB 1644](#) - the students with disabilities bill (that we seem to tell you about every session for the past many years) has popped up. Sponsors finally agreed with our concerns with previous year’s Professional Development and reporting provisions (yay!) and these provisions of the legislation are in a posture that we can support. However, a new provision not previously included in the bills has us opposed again to the legislation this year. Sponsors now want to put a camera in every self-contained classroom of children who are emotionally and behaviorally challenged to provide continuous audio and visual recording (boo!).

While the House bill has cameras in all 67 counties, the bill was amended in Senate [Appropriations Subcommittee on Education](#) to create a three-year pilot program for Broward and Volusia counties as a “compromise”. Placing cameras in classrooms opens schools to FERPA and HIPPA violations, creates conflict between parents as to whether classrooms should or should not be recorded, and can be used against teachers and staff in evaluations. To be clear, FEA opposes any cameras in classrooms and we are working with both sponsors to see this provision removed.

*Are you coming to Tallahassee?*

Big thank you to our Alachua, Citrus, Hardee, Hernando, Hillsborough, Manatee, Marion, Osceola, Palm Beach, St. Lucie and Sumter leaders and members who traveled to Tallahassee this week. We are working closely with the AFL-CIO Working Families Lobby Corps. Be sure to let us know when to expect you via [AFL-CIO Working Families Lobby Corps “I’m coming” tab](#), and book your hotels ASAP. If you have any questions about coming to Tallahassee please don’t hesitate to contact Tina Dunbar at [Tina.Dunbar@floridaea.org](mailto:Tina.Dunbar@floridaea.org).

Questions? Call PPA at 850-224-2078

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Thanks to Cathy Boehme and Yale Olenick for assisting with the content this week!