

Florida Education Association

Frontline Report

2023 Legislative Session

A Brief Recap of the Week

Though the official start to the legislative session is March 7, interim committee weeks are under way. For the most part, the education committees this week received presentations on various issues related to their committee's jurisdiction and did not act on bills. The one big exception was the House Choice and Innovation Subcommittee, which passed [HB 1](#), related to universal vouchers.

However, there was plenty of action outside of the committee meetings in Tallahassee this week. Gov. Ron DeSantis announced proposed legislation to target FEA, our local unions and our members, and AFT Secretary-Treasurer Fedrick Ingram and NEA President Becky Pringle joined FEA Secretary-Treasurer Nandi Riley for a rally in the Capitol to protect students' freedom to learn. Read below to find out more.

HB 1, Universal Vouchers

At the core of this bill is a massive transfer of funds from public schools to unaccountable private and religious schools and corporations. The official House analysis of [HB 1](#) lists the cost of the bill as "indeterminate," but the Florida Policy Institute estimates that [HB 1](#) will drain \$4 billion from public schools.

Reps. Angie Nixon (D-Jacksonville) and Susan Valdes (D-Tampa) both offered good amendments to make HB 1 align with the vision most Floridians have for education. Unfortunately, the committee voted down the following amendments:

- Setting an income threshold of \$1 million for voucher recipients to ensure that Florida taxpayers aren't subsidizing the private education of Florida's wealthiest residents.
- Requiring voucher schools to follow a student's Individual Education Plan.
- Requiring voucher schools to disclose if a classroom teacher is not certified.
- Prohibiting private schools from having admission policies that discriminate against students based on their race, color, national origin, sex, religion, disability, family status, birthplace, ancestry, culture, language, sexual orientation, gender identity or hairstyle.
- Suspending payments to any voucher school that disenrolls more than 25 percent of students who attend on a voucher within a single year

No parent wants to send their child to a school that meets just the bare minimum requirements. Yet with the failure of these amendments, it is clear that certain politicians are fine giving billions of public dollars to private schools that do not meet any requirements at all instead of providing what the majority of parents want, which is well-funded high quality public education.

The vote on the bill was 13-4 with Rep. Lisa Dunkley (D-Lauderhill) joining all the republicans to vote in favor of the bill. HB 1 will next be heard in the [PreK-12 Appropriations Subcommittee](#). This

will likely occur the week of Feb. 6, the next committee week. We will know for sure when the meeting agenda is released next week.



In Case You Missed it: Notable Tweets this Week

Rep. Spencer Roach (R-North Ft. Myers) thinks you and your colleagues provide an “inferior education,” as was noted in a reporter’s tweet:



Gary Fineout ✓
@fineout



In closing remarks in favor of the bill Rep. [@SpencerRoachFL](#) hails the voucher bill as a way to break the public school "monopoly." Then says that those who go to "government schools" often get an "inferior education" and it "condemns them to a life of government dependence."

11:14 AM · Jan 26, 2023 · 5,388 Views

13 Retweets 20 Quote Tweets 11 Likes



[Click here](#) to watch his remarks and [click here to send him an email](#) letting him know about the world-class education you do provide.

Rep. Angie Nixon’s (D-Jacksonville) response:



State Rep. Angie Nixon ✓
@AngieNixon



My level of anger knows no bounds at this point.

10:57 AM · Jan 26, 2023 · 1,157 Views



State Rep. Angie Nixon ✓
@AngieNixon



My republican colleague stated that public government schools often offer inferior education that leads to government dependence. What The Entire Hell?!

11:17 AM · Jan 26, 2023 · 4,781 Views



An Attack on FEA, Our Local Unions and Florida’s Educators

No matter what school or grade level they work in, every educator in Florida deserves to have a voice in their workplace, be supported and have the resources they need to provide meaningful lessons, and be paid a professional salary that allows them to live in the community where they

work. More than 150,000 teachers, staff and professors in Florida have found their voice by joining their local, state and national unions.

Gov. DeSantis has made it clear he intends to silence the voice of FEA members. As of the time this Frontline was written, no legislation had yet been filed. However, in a press conference Monday, DeSantis has declared his intent to do the following:

- Limit your First Amendment rights to free speech by disallowing any union communication on school campuses.
- Upend the democratic nature of our unions by allowing a minority of educators (40 percent) to decertify their local union.
- Give the Florida Department of Education the ability to inspect local unions' membership records. This will allow the state to create a database of union members. It is worth asking wondering why Gov. DeSantis and his friends want to maintain a list of Florida residents who belong to a union.

These provisions, of course, only apply to education unions. At the same press conference where Gov. DeSantis laid out those priorities, he also announced his proposal for teacher raises for the upcoming session. Florida currently has a \$22 billion budget surplus, and Gov. DeSantis proposes to use less than 1 percent of that towards raising teachers' salaries. By suggesting such a small increase, Gov. DeSantis boldly declared that his intent for Florida's teachers to remain among the lowest paid in the nation.

Support Students' Freedom to Learn

On the same week the nation paused to remember the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., news broke that Gov. DeSantis would not allow the Advanced Placement African American Studies course to be taught in Florida when the course is rolled out for the 2024-25 school year. Currently, the course is being piloted in 59 high schools. It was being piloted in 60 high schools, but the Tallahassee high school piloting the course stopped doing so after the governor's announcement.

On Wednesday, civil rights leaders, clergy, state legislators and community activists gathered in the Capitol to hold a rally and announce their intent to file a lawsuit if Gov. DeSantis goes through with his threat to forbid Florida students from taking the AP African American Studies course. AFT Secretary-Treasurer Fedrick Ingram, NEA President Becky Pringle and FEA Secretary-Treasurer Nandi Riley were all at the rally.

The plaintiffs of the potential lawsuit are three Tallahassee students who each spoke eloquently at the rally about the importance of their freedom to learn the full truth about America's history so they can learn from our past mistakes and build a better future for all of us. You can write to Gov. DeSantis and FLDOE Commissioner Manny Diaz asking them to allow the [AP African American Studies course here](#).

How You Can Take Action Today

Visit the [FEA website](#) to learn more about session and sign up for FEA Action Alert texts by texting "edactivist" to 22394.

Questions? Call PPA at 850-224-2078.

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