

Florida Education Association

Frontline Report

2024 Legislative Session

November 17, 2023

A Brief Recap of the Week

Five of the nine education committees and subcommittees in the Florida House and Senate met this week.

- The Senate PreK-12 Education Committee proposed and passed three bills ([SB 7000](#), [SB 7002](#) and [SB 7004](#)) dealing with removing regulations from public schools. Each of the bills passed the committee unanimously. Those three bills will be covered extensively below.
- The House Education Quality Subcommittee received a [presentation on teacher certification pathways](#).
- The House Choice and Innovation Subcommittee received a [presentation on career and technical education](#).
- The House Higher Education Appropriations Subcommittee received a [presentation on EASE grants](#).
- The House Postsecondary and Workforce Education Subcommittee received a [presentation on the REACH Act](#).

SB 7000, Deregulation of Personnel

This bill is both evidence that the great work education advocates like you are doing is paying dividends and a reminder that there is still much work left to be done.

Among the positive aspects of this bill is that it allows for the return of multiyear contracts for instructional staff. This has been an FEA priority since multiyear contracts for new employees were forbidden in 2011 under then Gov. Rick Scott through passage of SB 736.

SB 7000 also removes some, but not all, of the burdensome regulations regarding how teachers are paid. The bill removes the requirement that highly effective instructional personnel on the “performance pay schedule” receive a raise at least 25% greater than anyone else and removes

the requirement for advanced degree supplements to only be awarded if the degree is in the teacher's area of certification.

At the same time, SB 7000 pushes proposals that would harm teacher retention and show a continued distrust of and disrespect for educators. Specifically, [a portion of the bill](#) takes further aim at restricting collective bargaining. Together, these restrictions would weaken your ability to have a say in issues as important as salary incentives, how a multiyear contract is earned and the instructional calendar for your district.

If we are intent to retain the high-quality educators we have and recruit more educators to the profession, weakening their rights to advocate for their profession is bad public policy and we must work to remove this provision especially from the bill.

SB 7002, Deregulation of Finance, Facilities and Administrative Oversight

Of the three deregulation bills, this one will have the least direct impact on students and educators as it largely focuses on reducing regulations on school district facilities and reducing school district and superintendent paperwork.

Some of the paperwork removed by SB 7002 could make it easier for school districts to flout the class size amendment. And we thank the several senators, who during committee raised pointed questions about that provision.

Every parent wants their child to be able to receive the individual attention and one-on-one support they need to grow and thrive. That is why Florida's voters amended our state's Constitution to set class size limits in the first place, and we'll continue to advocate for full implementation of the class size amendment.

SB 7004, Deregulation of Assessment and Accountability

This bill is as notable for what it does not include as for what it does include. Nothing in SB 7004 reduces any testing nor the amount of time that students spend testing. SB 7004 continues the practice of favoring publicly funded private schools over public schools. Private schools still do not have to report their test scores publicly; they still don't receive an A-F grade from the Department of Education and they still face zero consequences for low test scores year after year. In short, parents who want to compare all the available education options for their children are unable to make an apples-to-apples comparison because publicly funded private schools still have zero transparency.

That being said, SB 7004 includes the beginnings of a retreat from Jeb Bush and his test-and-punish policies that have dominated Florida education policy for decades. This bill would end mandatory third grade retention for students who receive a Level 1 in ELA. Additionally, high

school students would no longer be required to pass the tenth grade ELA assessment and the Algebra 1 end of course exam to receive a diploma.

While superintendents from around the state testified in favor of these provisions, these steps towards ending Florida's punitive accountability system are sure to meet with significant pushback from the Department of Education and other entities who are more concerned with preserving the status quo than in doing what is best for Florida's children.

The Big Unknown

The House has yet to release their deregulation proposals, so it is unclear how different their language will look compared to the bills from the Senate. Will the House's proposals more closely align with the Department of Education's recommendations? Will the House do a better job of showing respect for teachers and taking steps to undo all of the burdensome regulations on pay while respecting our constitutional right to collective bargaining?

Regardless of what the House proposes, we'll continue our steadfast advocacy for Florida's educators to be paid what they are worth and to be treated with the respect they deserve. We'll need your continued help in those efforts!

Thanks and Looking Ahead

We thank Carmen Ward from the Alachua County Education Association, Michelle Dillon from the St. Johns Education Association and Mark Motl and Mike Greenan from the Putnam Federation of Teachers United who were in Tallahassee this week and did a great job testifying about the good and the bad parts of SB 7000, SB 7002 and SB 7004.

There are two interim committee weeks left this year: the week of Dec. 4 and the week of Dec. 11. Be sure to stay tuned to [FEA's legislative webpage](#) for all the latest information regarding these final two committee weeks. Be on the lookout for the Frontline report at the conclusion of each of those weeks.

How You Can Take Action Today

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