

Florida Education Association

# *Frontline Report*

*2024 Legislative Session*

*December 15, 2023*

## **A Brief Recap of the Week**

Interim committee weeks have come to an end, and the start of the 2024 legislative session is just around the corner on Jan. 9. A relatively small number of education bills moved during the committee weeks, but the bills that did move look to bring significant changes. In addition, the workshops and presentations held during this interim committee period provide some insight into legislation we can expect to during the regular session.

Read below to find out more.

## **The Senate has Big Plans. The House Remains Silent.**

As you might recall, last session's HB 1 required the State Board of Education to develop list of ways to "reduce regulations of public schools" and to make recommendations to the Legislature and the governor. The Senate has embraced this idea, even going far beyond the reductions recommend by the State Board. As of yet, the House has not released any of their proposals.

On Tuesday, the Senate Fiscal Policy Committee unanimously passed their three bills to roll back harmful education policy. The bills, [SB 7000](#), [7002](#) and [7004](#), have broad support from FEA, Florida PTA, Florida Association of School District Superintendents, Florida School Boards Association, and the Florida Association of School Administrators among others. Having passed their final committee stops, these bills are ready for a final vote in the Senate.

The only one of these bills that faced public opposition is SB 7004, the bill dealing with standardized testing and Florida's accountability system. The bill was opposed at the Fiscal Policy Committee by both [Jeb Bush's Foundation for Florida's Future](#) and by [Moms for Liberty](#). These organizations oppose the removal of punitive consequences for students based on test scores. Nathan Hoffman, who was representing the Foundation for Florida's Future, went so far as to suggest that high school diplomas in Florida would be worthless if students are no longer required

to pass the tenth grade ELA assessment and the Algebra I End of Course Exam in order to receive a diploma. In his closing on the bill, Sen. Corey Simon (R-Tallahassee) did a great job refuting that. [Take a listen to his closing remarks here.](#)

Undoing two decades of harmful education policy won't all happen in one legislative session, but these three bills are a step in the right direction. During the regular session, be on the lookout for ways you can get involved and place pressure on the House to make sure they follow through on the commitment HB 1 to reduce regulations on public schools.

## Thanks!



We want to give a big shout out to Patrick Strong from Okaloosa Education Staff Professional Association, Mark Motl and Michael Greenan from Putnam Federation of Teachers/United, Kim Andrews from Union of Escambia Education Staff Professionals and Gordan Longhofer from the Palm Beach County Classroom Teachers Association for showing up and testifying on SB 7000, 7002 and 7004!

## A Preview of Session

Perhaps the main difference between interim committee weeks and the regular session is that committee weeks are full of presentations and panel discussion that we don't see much of during the regular session. These presentations typically indicate what issues various committees will focus on during the regular session. There were seven different committee meetings that focused on workforce development and/or apprenticeships, so that is certain to be a big topic of legislation come January.

Another hot topic during the interim committee weeks was chronic absenteeism. Of particular note was when the House Education Quality Subcommittee was told students are more likely to be absent when they don't have culturally relevant instruction and when they [don't have meaningful relationships with their peers and with adults at school](#). This, of course, comes as no surprise to educators.

We warned that legislation like Stop Woke and Don't Say Gay would negatively impact students when they are no longer allowed to see themselves in the curriculum. The student-teacher relationship suffers when [curriculum is restricted to such a point that teachers are forced to walk on eggshells and can't veer from the curriculum in the slightest to take advantage of teachable moments](#). And, of course, students can't build relationships with teachers when they face an ever-

changing cast of substitute teachers. Chronic absenteeism is yet another consequence of the failure of Florida's leaders to address the teacher and staff shortage.

No matter what other topics come up when session does arrive, FEA and our local unions will continue to advocate for our [legislative agenda](#) of increasing pay for all educators and addressing the other root causes of the teacher and staff shortage.

## Join Us for Power Hour

We will resume our weekly Power Hours on the first day of session, Jan. 9, 2024. On that day and each following Tuesday through the end of session you can join us on Zoom for an update as on what is happening in the Legislature and for collective action as we reach out to lawmakers to make sure they hear the voices of educators.

Each Power Hour runs from 5:30-6:30 p.m. EST. [Register today!](#)

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### *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.

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