**Centennial PTA Legislative Update:**

3-4-2024

Heather Sievers, Founder of Advocates for Iowa’s Children and Rowan Siever’s Mom

Heather.sievers11@gmail.com

**Today’s Highlighted Bills:**

1. AEA education reform
2. Teacher Salaries
3. Educational State Funding Plans
4. Public Bargaining Unit (Union) Bill Updates

**Understanding the Legislative Session Process:**

The Iowa Legislature wrapped up its 8th week of session.  The House and Senate kept busy with debate last week, passing 82 bills.  That is 162 bills passed over a two-week period.

House bills that passed during debate will move to the Senate for voting or amendments and vice versa.

* House bills that don’t make it out of Senate committees are no longer eligible for debate.
* Bills created by the Senate and passed will then have to go back to the House for voting or amendments.
* Bills that are voted on too close to the March 15 “Funnel” deadline may not have enough time to get through the second required committee process. If bills do not meet deadlines and go through this required committee process, they will not move forward.

**Status of the Area Education Agencies [AEA] Reform Bills:**

**Last week, the House debated and passed their version of the AEA Bill.** [HF2612: AEA/Special Education Reform (House Version)](https://www.ialobby.com/billtracker/infonet?NoHeader=1):

**The Senate still is to debate and vote on their version of the AEA Bill:** [SF2386: Area Education Agencies](https://www.ialobby.com/billtracker/infonet?NoHeader=1) (Senate Version)

**House and Senate versions of the AEA reform bill do the following:**

1. **Shift approvals and decision making from local school boards and the AEA boards to the Department of Education [DE] and the DE director.**
	1. Budget requests will be submitted to the DE annually and the director of the DE will approve or reject the request within a certain timeframe.
2. **Reinstate the DE Division of Special Education for oversight and decision-making and transitions AEA boards to function only in an advisory capacity.**
	1. Senate bill eliminates administration AEA positions and hires in 139 new state employees that work in the DE who will have oversight of the AEAs.
	2. House bill only has 13 new DE positions and hires 40 positions that will report to the DE but will be working out of the AEA offices.
3. **Changes to the AEA Accreditation standards and rules.**
4. **Transition from a state-wide AEA integrated model for special educational services to a fee-for-service model with state aid money going to the school districts from annual budget requests approved by the DE and distributed by the Dept of Management.**
	1. Senate bill by July 2025, will only pay the AEA 10% of special education funding (i.e., schools annually can decide if they want to use the AEA, private agency, or hire their own staff).
	2. House bill by July 2025, will pay dollars to the school districts but requires that special education services are provided through the AEAs.
5. **Significant changes to a fee-for-service model for media services and professional development education,** so only if a school has the budget can they pay for media or professional development services.
	1. Senate bill includes that the AEA can only provide professional development curriculum from a list approved by the director of the DE or via special requests only if approved by the director if schools decide to use the AEA for these services.
	2. House bill allocated some dedicated funding to the school districts for media services and professional development services that will continue to be offered by the AEA.
6. **House Bill (not the Senate Bill) writes in a required Task Force to study special education services and the AEAs to determine what additional changes need to occur to support improvements in student outcomes**:
	1. will start at time the bill is passed into law through Dec 2024, in advance of the 2025 Legislative Session.

**Here are some resources to help you dive deeper into this AEA reform issue:**

o [Republican House Caucus Staff Review](https://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?f=001qEtWZJ2YoCUNukyP6uHgyVtvdMSAjo83fWBmrN-s56WdSFDxWqyspA4-J4WOy_0lU-D5JcMnNKKZUGXhPLlfATog6EJzjA68PcjU9B6qo14jkEC3FbcCFRGlZFU75rXILNOQY6bDgw881nYC6pJgvG6rWLk7OOZxGD-ZYihsT00oS1mIkqYlnDuJQJuIga3YMjo5-vF_Uu6SyR0lgvztRG2YD0u7rETCyTLUpM1cfj_gB1HpuoqaGqMTaITF8Kx6gAJyDvWjuZOiRNMu-k1O_MexX_ZezIyCDTvMmbJEvVY=&c=IjgNeYmaiDwZcxwTXCnBjRw86JAp1hTxjsTuo0fH7gKAbnBWYA9i0g==&ch=ghyOU2xpIsv9h0eWw57ltnPNGVnW8FfJfyM31l1Gn2J5Qp-E-mnfQg==)

o [Rural School Advocates of Iowa](https://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?f=001qEtWZJ2YoCUNukyP6uHgyVtvdMSAjo83fWBmrN-s56WdSFDxWqyspA4-J4WOy_0ll2sMtOV02aWlnHtEzjRWzzNIDbDGCht3SC5GzttWRwvP31w_9dlwc4WvBp9VrqWOxl4HgqUL0TcrntSblDZLrUctpMLjjYp4ifpe_eA1-qwjT_VJcbm4qg==&c=IjgNeYmaiDwZcxwTXCnBjRw86JAp1hTxjsTuo0fH7gKAbnBWYA9i0g==&ch=ghyOU2xpIsv9h0eWw57ltnPNGVnW8FfJfyM31l1Gn2J5Qp-E-mnfQg==) (written & video review)

o [Iowa State Education Association (ISEA)](https://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?f=001qEtWZJ2YoCUNukyP6uHgyVtvdMSAjo83fWBmrN-s56WdSFDxWqyspA4-J4WOy_0lm7HPPQQAAEXeYKfFS5NDnX1RLIdSWqMrc3NrchrJzt84dWafxiJkqVlgIu8VwNt-no1Xkm5yjhujvG5VzS2mHOe_D32GMvyiiYIzRg6NAJ5GgeeR-XnwXA==&c=IjgNeYmaiDwZcxwTXCnBjRw86JAp1hTxjsTuo0fH7gKAbnBWYA9i0g==&ch=ghyOU2xpIsv9h0eWw57ltnPNGVnW8FfJfyM31l1Gn2J5Qp-E-mnfQg==)

o [AEA Advocacy](https://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?f=001qEtWZJ2YoCUNukyP6uHgyVtvdMSAjo83fWBmrN-s56WdSFDxWqyspHj-TVIK3R-p9a2keG8oinbpl7c_D4VKxKcJghtvAFWI2qS2jQqUpVCX5jDl3d0HE2mkrhwBcm_HfcXvT5oWgKLJjg9PAwxgGZJ35Su2NLP6CcZVWMGx_rsg5m1vesob0A==&c=IjgNeYmaiDwZcxwTXCnBjRw86JAp1hTxjsTuo0fH7gKAbnBWYA9i0g==&ch=ghyOU2xpIsv9h0eWw57ltnPNGVnW8FfJfyM31l1Gn2J5Qp-E-mnfQg==)

o You can watch the House debate recording [here](https://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?f=001qEtWZJ2YoCUNukyP6uHgyVtvdMSAjo83fWBmrN-s56WdSFDxWqyspA4-J4WOy_0lZB8tQTTrKfA0PvnyyN9fEya58S92wgz9VlcTOEEwuLsy3tB9EZUnSLs5Pwn3YNQBs7ozmAA_YC14A_EZJX5V00QFlcLwZeII9dgzR5Mhg5hPpaKTkjmW9BKXzvTgu3YclaeK13j8KCbBG-SJ3F2LN9RGpNzmm4fHNCNOuTZedAuNtrWRy4in2NjTWJuVLGVLbjrjAFjV5IJ2sEClT_42ILNOaVKh_Fmb_XOeCiIquqQLVHw_1WUI41QYtDh_8ygXAdPpDsdrrJ_PGGZUq3Kb1Q==&c=IjgNeYmaiDwZcxwTXCnBjRw86JAp1hTxjsTuo0fH7gKAbnBWYA9i0g==&ch=ghyOU2xpIsv9h0eWw57ltnPNGVnW8FfJfyM31l1Gn2J5Qp-E-mnfQg==).

o Check out our Snapshot on the AEA debate [here](https://r20.rs6.net/tn.jsp?f=001qEtWZJ2YoCUNukyP6uHgyVtvdMSAjo83fWBmrN-s56WdSFDxWqyspO0Vy8pDaQarUn8j3i7tSari33prrv7HEXJDfEVxbd43oeCr9V7O7jXbSciKXo8P3wBKCIRssm-4p9qqxKmyHSD6knLN3G0HftYL8VwqFJBvIYDSPWr40Uk=&c=IjgNeYmaiDwZcxwTXCnBjRw86JAp1hTxjsTuo0fH7gKAbnBWYA9i0g==&ch=ghyOU2xpIsv9h0eWw57ltnPNGVnW8FfJfyM31l1Gn2J5Qp-E-mnfQg==).

**1248**

**Teacher Pay increases:**

Iowa’s average teacher pay was $7,035 behind the national average **(Iowa Condition of Education Report and the National Education Association), and Iowa ranks 38th in beginning teacher pay (Learning Policy Institute).**

1. Senate continues to imbed teacher pay increases within the AEA bill and sets the minimum annual salary to at least $46,251 (which is lower than the $50,000 minimum proposed in the original Governor’s bill).
2. The House (as requested by advocates) has separated out the teacher pay from the AEA bill into a separate bill [HF 2630](https://www.legis.iowa.gov/publications/search/document?fq=id:1447371&q=education), which supports funding for minimum teacher salaries at $50,000 (same as proposed by governor) and includes funding for increases or bonuses to teachers, as well as minimum salary increases for education support staff to be at $15.00/hr, which includes our para-professionals, clerical staff, food services, IT, etc.)

**State Supplemental Aid (School Funding) Update:**
Annual funding increases have not allowed schools to pay staff salaries sufficient to compete with the private sector and keep pace with all of the other costs of operating schools and meeting student needs.

State funding for public schools has not kept up with rising costs for 11 of the last 12 years.

* For the 2023-24 school year, Iowa K-12 funding is down $528M/yr compared to the 2016-17 school year *when accounting for inflation*.
* In 2022, Iowa spent $3,081 below the national average, ranking Iowa 35th in the nation. (US Census Data from May 2023 reporting on FY 2022 expenditures).

**Compare** the 2024 proposed investments in Iowa Schools (fiscal year 2025-2026) State Supplemental Aid: Debates underway within House and Senate to determine rates for school funding:

* Iowa Senate Democrats $300 million (proposal) 6%
* House Republicans $147 million (passed last week) 3%; House democrats requests 6% but it was not supported.
* Governor Reynolds $106 million (proposal)

**This 6% increase in state aid will allow public schools to:**
○ Reduce class sizes

○ Support funding for universal pre-school
○ Expand student mental health support
○ Prevent budget cuts, layoffs, and loss of academic programs and services
○ Raise pay for teachers
○ Reduces property taxes

Public school students deserve the same state investment now being given to exclusive private schools through the governor’s voucher program: $300 million. After a decade of low funding and 134 public school closures, this investment is fair and fiscally responsible.

**Public Sector Union Bill Update:**

[Senate File SF 2374](https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislation/BillBook?ga=90&ba=SF%202374) **A** **BILL** **FOR** An Act relating to retention and recertification elections for public employee collective bargaining units.

* Since 2017 when significant changes to collective bargaining laws were enacted, most public employees have chosen to retain their union representation in repeated recertification elections.
* This new bill states that the board will request a list of public employees in the bargaining unit, and the employer must file that list within 10 days. If the employer fails to meet the deadline, then the union will be decertified after 5 days, unless:
	+ The employer is able to file the list of employees during that 5 days after deadline, or
	+ unions go to court to require employers to file the list of employees and require the employers to hold elections, also required within 5 days of missing the deadline.

**ADDITIONAL BILLS OF INTEREST:**

* 1. [HF243: Autism Spectrum Disorder Coverage](https://www.ialobby.com/billtracker/infonet?NoHeader=1) : Eliminates age limit and maximum benefit amount for health insurance coverage of autism spectrum disorders.
	2. [HF608: School Employee Seizure Training](https://www.ialobby.com/billtracker/infonet?NoHeader=1) : Requires schools to train employees on seizure identification and assistance.
	3. [HF610: Autism Excused School Absences](https://www.ialobby.com/billtracker/infonet?NoHeader=1) : Requires schools to excuse absences for students diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder to attend certain appointments.
	4. [HF2547: Chronic Absenteeism](https://www.ialobby.com/billtracker/infonet?NoHeader=1): Requires the development of personalized attendance improvement plans for students who are chronically absent from public schools.
	5. [HSB543: Governor's Tax Bill](https://www.ialobby.com/billtracker/infonet?NoHeader=1): The Governor's tax bill.