

Legislative Update

Issue No. 10-24, 03/08/2024



The Iowa State Capitol very early in the morning. (Photo by the Capitol Group)

Second Legislative Deadline Looms

The second procedural hurdle of the 2024 Session of the Iowa Legislature arrives at the end of this upcoming week, March 15.

The so-called “second funnel” is the date by which a bill has to be approved by a committee in the opposite chamber - meaning a House File must be approved by a Senate committee and a Senate File by a House committee to remain eligible for further consideration this year.

Appropriations, Ways and Means and Government Oversight committee bills are the exceptions to the “funnel” rules, as they are exempt from procedural deadlines.

The 100th calendar day of the session, the unofficial end of the 2024 Legislative Session, arrives on April 16. It is also the day on which daily lawmaker “per diem” payments end.

Bills of Interest

(HF - House File, HSB - House Study Bill, SF - Senate File, SSB - Senate Study Bill)

(F - For, A - Against, M - Undecided/monitoring)

SF 2386 (formerly SSB 3073) - AEA Reorganization 2 (M) - The bill as amended does the following:

- In fiscal year 2025 AEAs would receive funds deducted from school districts' state aid for special education services. They would also receive 40% of the calculated amount for media services and for educational services.

- In the second year of the Senate proposal, AEAs would receive 10% of special education funding, as well as the 40% for media and general education services. The remaining 90% of special education funds and the 60% for media and general education services, would go directly to school districts, which could then use that funding to contract with AEAs or provide the services independently.

-Oversight of AEA's would move to the Department of Education.

- Requires the Department of Education to work with AEAs in developing a plan to transfer current AEA employees (involved in oversight) to the Department of Education as needed beginning July 1, 2025.

On Senate debate calendar

SF 2354 (formerly SSB 3146) - Behavioral Health System Establishment (M) - This bill relates to the transition of behavioral health services from a mental health and disabilities services system to a behavioral health service system, and the transfer of disability services to the Department of Health and Human Services' Division of Aging and Disability Services.

- The bill designates the Department of Health and Human Services as the state mental health authority for the purpose of directing benefits from the federal community mental health services block grant, and the state authority for the purpose of directing benefits from the federal substance abuse prevention and treatment block grant;

- The bill also establishes a Behavioral Health Services System for the purposes of implementing a statewide system of prevention, education, early intervention, treatment, recovery support, and crisis services related to mental health, substance use, tobacco use, and problem gambling;

- The bill requires the Department of Health and Human Services to divide the state into designated behavioral health districts. It also requires each district to provide behavioral health prevention, education, early intervention, treatment, recovery support, and crisis services throughout the district.

- The proposal requires the Department to designate an administrative services organization to oversee and organize each district and each Behavioral Health Services System service associated with the district.

Approved by Health and Human Services. Referred to Appropriations. Approved by Appropriations subcommittee.

SF 2192 (formerly SSB 3045) - Core Curriculum (M) - Current law requires the State Board of Education to adopt rules that establish a core curriculum. The bill modifies this provision to instead require the state board to adopt a core curriculum. The bill provides that rules adopted by the State Board of Education on or before the effective date of the bill relating to the core curriculum shall remain effective until modified or rescinded by action of the state board.

On Senate debate calendar

HF 2652 (formerly HSB 692) - School Safety Funds (M) - The bill authorizes school districts to purchase, install, and operate a mobile panic alert system if the system is capable of connecting different emergency services technologies to ensure real-time coordination between employees and law enforcement agencies and if the system is capable of integrating with local public safety answering point infrastructure and existing land mobile radio platform technology.

The bill requires each school district, accredited nonpublic school, charter school, and innovation zone school to complete a comprehensive review and evaluation of the school's ability to ensure the safety of students enrolled in the school and of school employees.

The bill establishes that, on or before the first day of the school calendar for the school year beginning July 1, 2024, each school is required to submit the results of the comprehensive review and evaluation to the department of public safety's school safety bureau, police forces of the counties in which school attendance centers are located, the local district office of the state patrol, and, if applicable, the police forces of the cities in which school attendance centers are located.

The bill requires that, on or before the first day of the school calendar for the school year beginning July 1, 2025, each school district, accredited nonpublic school, charter school, and innovation zone school is required to have at least one handheld or console radio, at each attendance center, that is capable of accessing a public safety answering point.

The bill requires the Department of Public Safety, in collaboration with the Department of Education and the Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management, to convene a task force to study and make recommendations related to the safety and security standards of schools and school infrastructure. The findings and recommendations are required to include a proposal for modifications to the state building code that are applicable to the construction of new attendance centers and the renovation of existing attendance centers and that incorporate standards designed to increase the safety of schools and school infrastructure.

On House debate calendar

HF 2612 (formerly HSB 713) - AEA Second Attempt (M) - The bill keeps AEAs as the sole provider of special education support in the state. State funding for special education services would go to the school districts, and the districts would be required to use that funding for AEA services.

School districts would receive state funds for media services and other education services that have been provided by AEAs, and the districts would be able to choose whether to use that money with the AEAs or with another party once the bill is fully phased in for the 2026-27 school year.

The bill would also bring the AEAs under the control of the State Department of Education and create a new State Division of Special Education. The division would handle oversight and federal and state compliance for educating students with disabilities.

The bill would change the AEAs' governing board's role to an advisory capacity and require state approval of AEA budgets, with the salary for AEA administrators would be capped at 125 percent of the average salary of all the school superintendents within the AEA's boundary.

Finally the bill also would establish a task force to study AEAs with recommendations related to property owned by the AEAs, the services they provide, the accountability and oversight measures in place, the organizational structure of special education in Iowa and a timeline for staffing modifications due by the end of the year.

Approved by the House 53-41

HF 2586 (formerly HSB 675) - Armed School Officers and Employees (M) - The bill requires all school districts with a total enrollment of at least 8,000 students to employ, or retain the services of, at least one private school security officer or school resource officer to guard each attendance center where students enrolled in grades 9 through 12 regularly attend classes, unless a majority of the members of the board of directors of the school district vote to not employ or retain a private school security officer or a school resource officer.

The bill also requires the Department of Education to develop and administer a school security personnel grant program to provide annual grants to match monies provided by such school districts to allow the school districts to offset costs associated with employing, or retaining the services of, a private school security officer or school resource officer. The bill provides that the amount of an annual grant provided by the Department to a school district that has provided matching monies pursuant to this provision shall not exceed \$50,000.

The bill defines "private school security officer" to mean an individual employed by a private security business who possesses a permit to carry weapons.

Finally, the bill provides that a person may be issued a permit to carry weapons if the person is a school employee of a school district, a private school, or an institution of higher education as long as the person completes a prescribed firearm safety training course.

Approved by the House 61-34. Referred to Senate Education. Approved by subcommittee

HF 2547 (formerly HF 2254) - Chronic Absenteeism Plan (M) This bill requires the development of an attendance improvement plan when a student is chronically absent from school.

Specifically, the bill provides that, when a student who is enrolled in a public school was absent from school for at least 10-percent of the school days in the prior school year for any reason, the student or the student's

parent, guardian, or custodian, as applicable, a representative of the public school, and a representative of the county attorney of the county in which the public school is located shall meet to discuss how to improve the student's attendance, create an attendance improvement plan, and sign the attendance improvement plan.

On House debate calendar

HF 2545 (formerly HF 2329) - Comprehensive Curriculum Review (M) - This bill requires the director of the Department of Education to conduct a comprehensive review of the state's high school graduation requirements, core curriculum, core content standards, and educational standards and recommend policy changes.

The bill requires that the recommendations for policy changes be included in a preliminary report to the Governor and the General Assembly submitted on or before December 31, 2024, with a final report due by July 1, 2025.

Approved by the House 61-34. Referred to Senate Education Committee. Approved by subcommittee

HF 2509 (formerly HSB 653) - Behavioral Health System Establishment (M) - This bill relates to the transition of behavioral health services from a mental health and disabilities services system to a behavioral health service system, and the transfer of disability services to the Department of Health and Human Services' Division of Aging and Disability Services.

- The bill designates the Department of Health and Human Services as the state mental health authority for the purpose of directing benefits from the federal community mental health services block grant, and the state authority for the purpose of directing benefits from the federal substance abuse prevention and treatment block grant;

- The bill also establishes a Behavioral Health Services System for the purposes of implementing a statewide system of prevention, education, early intervention, treatment, recovery support, and crisis services related to mental health, substance use, tobacco use, and problem gambling;

- The bill requires the Department of Health and Human Services to divide the state into designated behavioral health districts. It also requires each district to provide behavioral health prevention, education, early intervention, treatment, recovery support, and crisis services throughout the district.

- The proposal requires the Department to designate an administrative services organization to oversee and organize each district and each Behavioral Health Services System service associated with the district.

Approved by Human Resources. Referred to Appropriations. Approved by subcommittee

HF 2402 (formerly HSB 502) - PMICs (M) - The bill requires the Department of Health and Human Services, no later than January 1, 2025, to utilize a competitive bidding process and issue an invitation to bid to select one or more currently licensed PMICs in the state to provide access to PMIC services for children with specialized needs including problematic sexualized behaviors, a history of aggression, or a diagnosis of intellectual or developmental disability.

Approved by the House 97-0. Referred to the Senate Health and Human Services Committee. Approved by subcommittee.

HF 2397 (formerly) HSB 617 - Payment For MH Ambulance Transport (M) - The bill allows an ambulance service program to transport a person experiencing a mental health crisis to a mental health access center. The bill directs the Department of Health and Human Services to authorize payments to service programs for the transportation of persons to mental health access centers in amounts similar to payments authorized for the transportation of persons to hospital emergency departments.

Approved by the House 97-0. Referred to Senate Health and Human Services. Approved by subcommittee

Approved by both chambers:

SR 102 - Brain Health (M) - This resolution states that the term "brain health" means all aspects of the brain impacted by biological and physical characteristics of the brain which may impact mood and behavior. It also

states that the Senate recognizes the term brain health as a term mental health providers, caretakers, and every lowan may use synonymously with the terms mental health, mental illness, and behavioral health in order to encourage lowans to seek brain health services in an environment free of stigma.

Passed the Senate

HR 102 - Brain Health (M) - This resolution states that the term “brain health” means all aspects of the brain impacted by biological and physical characteristics of the brain which may impact mood and behavior. It also states that the House of Representatives recognizes the term brain health as a term mental health providers, caretakers, and every lowan may use synonymously with the terms mental health, mental illness, and behavioral health in order to encourage lowans to seek brain health services in an environment free of stigma.

Passed the House