



## Senate Takes the Spotlight: Key Education Bills Advance as Session Heats Up

Hello and Happy Friday!

While it was a lighter week in Springfield, things are far from quiet. With the House on a week-long break, the Senate took center stage—focusing on fine-tuning bills and running amendments through committee before the final stretch. Floor action picked up at the end of the week, with several bills advancing, but the real wave of Senate votes is expected to hit next week. Below is a roundup of key committee activity and the bills that made it through the Senate floor.

### Senate Education Committee

Two bills were heard for the first time in the Senate Education Committee on Wednesday, and while both bills passed committee, each of those were held for further deliberation before they could be called on the floor for a full vote.

**SB 2423** (Lightford; D-Hillside) ISBE's suspension/expulsion bill was heard for the first time in the Senate. There was substantial discussion surrounding the proposal, with members echoing concerns brought forth by both proponents of the bill, as well as the opponents. Generally, committee members expressed concern about long-term exclusions for students aged 5 through 7, but also indicated a need to ensure that school administrators had resources to appropriately address safety concerns in their schools. The sponsor agreed additional conversation was crucial before the proposal advanced, and agreed to continue discussions before the bill was sent to the floor for consideration.

**SB 1943** (Cappel; D-Crest Hill) is an initiative of the Illinois Association of Administrators of Special Education (IAASE) and is in response to concerns that have emerged with the implementation of the new restraint and exclusion laws. The bill seeks to clarify what constitutes restraint and time out.

The following bills returned to committee with amendments that moved most parties to neutral and were passed out of the committee and are heading to the floor:

**SB 2057** (Hastings; D-Frankfort) This bill requires ISBE and the State Fire Marshal to provide clear guidelines for schools and first responders on developing threat assessment procedures, rapid entry response plans, and cardiac emergency response plans. It also directs the State Board, in consultation with the Illinois State Police, to adopt rules and issue emergency guidance to help schools implement these safety measures. The bill grants temporary emergency rulemaking authority for up to one year and ensures schools receive specific guidance on required components of their threat assessment procedures.

**SB 0071** (Murphy; D-Des Plaines) Under this bill, school districts must, by July 1, 2027, develop procedures for each of their schools to respond to the release or explosion of a hazardous substance related to storage or rail transport, using guidance provided by the Illinois Emergency Management Agency and Office of Homeland Security. Districts are also required to share relevant and appropriate information about these procedures with all school personnel.

**[SB 1616](#)** (Villivalam; D-Chicago) This bill requires the State Board of Education to annually identify and share a list of culturally or religiously significant dates on which students may have out-of-school commitments. By July 1 each year, the list must be posted on the State Board's website and distributed to school districts and relevant organizations as a scheduling resource for major school events. The list is nonexhaustive, and school districts are encouraged to add additional dates based on their local community's needs and demographics.

**[SB 1947](#)** (Loughran Cappel; D-Crest Hill) ISBE's licensure bill that seeks to address the teacher shortage and strengthen the educator pipeline by implementing several key reforms. It creates a pathway to begin preparations to create a paraprofessional pathway program for expedited licensure in specific content areas, making it easier for paraprofessionals to transition into teaching roles. It also streamlines licensure requirements for school support personnel who already hold active professional licenses, reducing bureaucratic hurdles, and replaces coursework requirements for out-of-state or internationally trained educators with exam-based coverage, ensuring a more flexible path to certification.

**[SB 1519](#)** (Villa; D-West Chicago) The bill requires annual reporting on student referrals to law enforcement until the 2027–2028 school year, with statewide reporting due by January 31, 2029. It also requires any school district with a school resource officer to have a memorandum of understanding with the local law enforcement agency. Additionally, the bill prohibits issuing students monetary fines, fees, tickets, or citations as disciplinary consequences for incidents occurring on school grounds, during school hours, or while using school transportation.

#### **Senate Labor Committee**

**[SB 212](#)** (Fine; D-Glenview) makes changes to the existing requirements that employers must adhere to for nursing mothers. Specifically, the bill requires that nursing mothers are provided their regular rate of pay during breaks they use to express breastmilk.

#### **Senate Pensions Committee**

The Senate Pensions Committee held a subject matter hearing on Thursday morning on the Governor's Office's proposal to address the long-debated Social Security Safe Harbor concern. Last year, the Governor's approach focused on funding existing pension liabilities, but this year, the discussion includes raising the Tier 2 pensionable earnings cap to align with the Social Security wage base—an essential step in maintaining compliance. Segal estimated the first-year cost of this adjustment at \$78 million in FY26, and the Governor's proposed budget does include that allocation. While there is broad consensus on the need to address the issue of inadequate benefits for Tier 2 employees, the Governor's Office firmly opposes refinancing pension debt or extending the payoff timeline. This stance faced pushback from committee members, who questioned why a responsible reamortization approach was not under consideration. The discussion also touched on the long-term economic implications of failing to adequately staff Illinois classrooms and schools due to pension instability and an inadequate benefits plan for employees.

#### **Senate Bills Passed the Floor**

**[SB 28](#)** (Lightford; D-Hillside) provides that beginning July 1, 2025, school districts may include student growth data as a factor in evaluation plans, but it will no longer be required as a significant factor, shifting the overall approach to principal and teacher evaluations.

**[SB 1329](#)** (Murphy; D-Des Plaines) allows the State Superintendent of Education to notify a licensed educator's current or most recent employer if the educator is under investigation for misconduct that poses a threat to student safety, including serious physical injury, sexual misconduct, or certain criminal offenses.

[\*\*SB 1555\*\*](#) (Cappel; D-Crest Hill) revises the Advisory Council on the Education of Children with Disabilities by expanding its membership from 27 to 28 members and increasing the number of ex-officio voting members from 4 to 5, adding the Secretary of Early Childhood or their designee.

[\*\*SB 1920\*\*](#) (Turner, D; D-Decatur) requires ISBE to encourage school districts to gather teaching resources that support American Sign Language (ASL) programs. These resources may include information on the benefits of early ASL instruction, strategies for integrating ASL into K–8 curricula, and guidance on proper ASL instruction methods for young students.

**Next Week**

Upcoming action for next week should be substantial as both chambers are approaching their third reading deadline of Friday, April 11. There are almost 80 House bills being tracked that impact public education that could see floor action this coming week. Although many were held for amendments that have not been filed just yet, it is possible for quick turnarounds and swift passage, so we will be on high alert!

Thank you, as always, for your advocacy efforts!

Sincerely,

Emily Warnecke  
Chief of Staff