



North Carolina Education Bills

There are many bills directed at EDUCATION. Below are some important ones worthy of attention at the present time.

SB 337: An Act to Create the NC Public School Charter Board and Make Other Changes to Charter School Laws moves responsibility for charter schools from the State Board of Education to an independent agency. S337 would create a Public Charter School Board with 11 members, nine of whom would be appointed by the Governor and leaders of the House and Senate. Although administratively within the Department of Public Instruction, the State Board could only veto any Charter Board action by a 3/4's vote. The bill would eliminate the current requirement for certain proportions of charter teachers to hold teacher certificates and the voice of local school boards to affect charter growth. It assures that charter schools report to the State Board, as well as the Charter Board, under the Uniform Education Reporting System and provides greater transparency on how local per pupil funds are calculated. The specter of "separate, but equal" and a possible reduction in teaching quality gives cause for concern about these proposed changes. In combination with SB 236 (see below), authority of Boards of Education would be significantly reduced. Still in the Senate Education/Higher Education Committee, this bill deserves careful monitoring.

SB 236, authorizing County Commissions to take over "construction, improvement, ownership, and acquisition of Public School property" undermines School Boards statewide. By giving County Commissions the authority to, with their own vote alone, take over the decisions about purchase, design, construction, and renovation of school buildings from Boards of Education, these important decisions are removed from the very people who know better than Commissioners what is needed in their schools. Moreover, the legislation offers the potential for Commissioners to shift capital improvement resources from traditional public schools to public charter schools and to consolidate schools without any say-so from those responsible for public education.

HB 144: Home-school Education Income Tax Credit provides a tax credit of \$1200/semester per child (\$2400 yr) for dependent children home-schooled for a minimum of 70 days/semester. The Legislative Fiscal Note for this bill indicates:

(1) Loss of tax revenue to NC from this credit is projected at \$96.9 million in 2013-2014 and to more than double over 5 years to a loss of \$208.4 million by 2017-18;

(2) The projected negative impact on revenue DOES NOT account for the incentive the legislation would likely offer to increase home-schooling.

While there are no data on which to base a more accurate projection of increased costs (from children transferring from private & religious schools to home-schools) or savings to the state (from students transferring from public schools), what is certain is

- A loss of substantial state revenue;
- Increased cost (from private & religious school transfers);
- State "savings" (from public school transfers) will be revenue "LOSS" to local schools.

Bills such as SB132: Health Curriculum/Pre-Term Birth and HB146: Back to Basics further extend the influence and control of the current Legislature over public education by determining curricula. In the case of SB132, the curriculum being specified is highly politicized and not based on adequate scientific research. These bills represent legislative usurpation of professional educators' authority and a denigration of the profession of education itself.

A spate of "local" bills (SB 317, SB 323, SB 325) is also directed at changing School Boards. While local issues vary, they involve redistricting & changes in School Board representation & elections. In SB 317, School Board elections in Guilford Co. would change from non-partisan to partisan. In others, School Board elections would be moved from General to Primary elections (SB 325-Wake Co) or a time determined by "general State law" (SB 323- Pitt Co). Advocates for maximum citizen involvement in elections will recognize this as a concern because of the skewed representation typical of primary voters, resulting in school boards being elected by a smaller, more partisan electorate. Only SB 323 allows voters to decide on proposed changes to a School Board by requiring a referendum.

Researched by the Brevard branch AAUW Public Policy Committee