

MEMORANDUM

To: DeKalb County School Board Members
Superintendent Horton

From: Dan Baskerville and Dentons Public Policy Team

Date: 3/5/25

Subject: Legislative Update

As you know from the weekly updates we provide, there are numerous education related Bill's that have been introduced this session. Since that list is too long to discuss this afternoon, we will focus on the Bill's of might be most significant interest, and do that by category. Please note that because this memo was requested by March 5, the status of several bills below may change by next week.

1) Speed Cameras in School Zones

House Bill 225 - This bill relates to speed detection devices by repealing all laws related to the enforcement of speeding violations in school zones through the use of automated traffic enforcement safety devices and prohibits a local governing body or law enforcement agency from entering into or renewing a contract that provides for enforcement of laws relative to speeding violations in school zones through the use of automated traffic enforcement safety.

Sponsor: Washburn

Status: Passed the House; pending Senate committee assignment

House Bill 651— This bill mandates improved signage standards requiring larger, more visible signs that include real-time speed displays and flashing lights to warn drivers. Additionally, it establishes a structured allocation of collected fines, directing 50% toward local law enforcement and public safety initiatives and **50% toward school safety programs**.

Sponsor: Powell

Status: Passed the House; pending Senate committee assignment

Senate Bill 75 - This bill defines school zone, school zone speed limit, and hours of operation for one hour twice a day at the discretion of the school, modeled after Decatur's policy. The bill also requires signage at the half-mile marker or as close as possible before a school zone.

Sponsor: Burns

Status: Passed the Senate Public Safety Committee; pending in Senate Rules

2) School Safety and Security

House Bill 268 - creates a statewide student information database run by the Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency (GEMA) to improve information sharing between school systems, law enforcement, and mental health professionals. Specifically, in short it:

- Creates an Office of Safe Schools within the Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency (GEMA/HS)
- Requires a sending school to transfer a student's entire academic and disciplinary record to the receiving school within five days
- Provides that a student's education records must be provided to parents within 3 business days
- Requires local school districts to have behavioral threat assessment teams and use an anonymous reporting app for potential threats
- Creates the Student School Safety (S3) database under GEMA, high-level school administrators, and behavioral threat assessment teams will have authorized access to the S3 database
- Creates qualified behavioral health coordinator positions and grants to fund them
- Creates a process to remove students and place them in a virtual school while behavioral threat assessments are being completed
- Creates tax incentives for firearm storage equipment
- Requires the Office of Safe Schools in conjunction with the State Board of Education and the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities to develop a process for a student, or his/her parent or legal guardian, to request the closure of a student's case.

Sponsor: Persinger

Status: Passed the House; pending Senate committee assignment

Senate Bill 17 - This bill would require local school systems to implement a mobile panic alert system connecting disparate emergency services technologies to ensure real-time coordination between multiple state and local first responder agencies in the event of a school security emergency. It also requires each local school system to procure school mapping data for each public and private school within its boundaries.

Sponsor: Anavitarte

Status: Passed the Senate Education and Youth Committee; pending in Senate Rules

Budget Funding: In addition to the ongoing school safety grants in the state budget, the AFY25 budget included an additional \$50 million of one-time school safety funds (\$158.9 million total, or \$68,760 per school, for school safety).

3) Update QBE Funding Formula

House Bill 42 - This bill deals with the program weights and funding requirements under QBE to revise provisions for the calculation and distribution of funds by the State Board of Education to local units of administration for student transportation programs.

Sponsor: V. Davis

Status: Pending in the House Education Committee

House Bill 245 - This bill relates to QBE by adding a program for students living in poverty to the table of quality basic education instructional programs with weights and student-teacher ratios.

Sponsor: Olaleye

Status: Pending in the House Education Committee

House Resolution 68 - This resolution supports revising the Quality Basic Education (QBE) and Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) funding formulas.

Sponsor: Glaize

Status: Pending in the House Education Committee

Budget: In the proposed FY26 budget, an increase of \$10,313,902 for funds for pupil transportation formula grants to reflect updated bus counts and operating expenses

4) Expand Childhood Education and Literacy

House Bill 307 – this bill adds “dyslexia” and characteristics of dyslexia to HB 538/Early Literacy Act (2023 session). The bill specifically states that “three-cueing” curriculum and instructional materials cannot be considered high-quality instructional materials as part of the “Science of Reading.”

Sponsor: Ballard

Status: Passed the House; pending in the Senate Education and Youth Committee

Budget: In the FY 26 proposed budget, an increase of \$339,799 funds to sustain supplements for school literacy leads at all 1,343 K-3 schools

5) Mental Health and Counseling Services

House Bill 59 - This bill would provide state funding for one school counselor for every 250 full-time equivalent students.

Sponsor: Glaize

Status: Pending in the House Education Committee

House Bill 81 - This bill would allow the state to enter into the Interstate Compact for School Psychologists so that school psychologists from other states would be able to work in Georgia with an out-of-state license.

Sponsor: Ballard

Status: Passed the House; passed the Senate Education and Youth Committee; pending in Senate Rules

House Bill 554– This bill enacts the "APEX Now Program," to provide support for mental health services to students and school personnel experiencing incidents of violence, threats of violence, natural disasters, and other crises. It provides for such program to be established within the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities, provides for the development and promulgation of a mental health crisis plan, and provides for a 24-hour online and telephonic hotline.

Sponsor: Townsend

Status: Pending in the House Education Committee

Budget: The AFY25 budget included \$872,000 as part of QBE to reduce the student-to-school psychologist ratio.

6) School District Governance

Senate Bill 4 - Strikes “micromanage” in state statute, and provides for public complaints with the Georgia Professional Standards Commission by residents 18+ alleging ethics code violations by members of local boards of education. It also gets rid of required school board training beyond the 15 hours when first elected. It outlines required and prohibited topics in training programs for local board of education members and provides for a sanction for school board trainers who do not comply. Training cannot encourage lobbying of the legislature and cannot include statements, recommendations, or suggestions “that are for or against current, pending, past, or future legislation affecting local school systems.”

Sponsor: Dolezal

Status: Passed the Senate, but motion made to reconsider

Senate Bill 36 - The Georgia Religious Freedom Restoration Act, which would require the state government and all political subdivisions, including public schools, to allow for free and unburdened exercise of religion.

Sponsor: Setzler

Status: Passed the Senate; awaiting House Committee assignment

Senate Bill 74 - This bill relates to the sale or distribution of harmful materials to minors by repealing an exemption for libraries and librarians, so that any violation of the Code section is a misdemeanor of a high and aggravated nature when committed knowingly and providing for a defense for librarians who make good faith attempts to identify and remove material harmful to minors.

Sponsor: Burns

Status: Passed the Senate; pending in the House Non-Civil Judiciary Committee

Senate Bill 82 (HB 202) - The Local Charter School Authorization and Support Act of 2025, provides for local boards of education to reconsider the denial of local charter school petitions and requires the Office of Charter School Compliance to prepare guidelines for local boards of education to evaluate charter school petitions. If a local board denies a petition, it must provide a written statement of denial to the charter petitioner, the State Board of Education, and the Office of Charter School Compliance, specifically stating the reasons for denial and listing all deficiencies within ten days. A school district with 60,000 or more students that denies three or more local charter petitions that are subsequently approved by the State Charter Commission will lose its flexibility contract. A district will receive capital outlay credits and a \$250,000 per year incentive for three years on August 1 for each locally approved charter.

Sponsor: Dixon

Status: Passed the Senate Education and Youth Committee; pending in Senate Rules

Senate Bill 120 - This bill provides that public schools, local education agencies, and public postsecondary institutions shall not promote, support, or maintain any programs or activities that advocate for DEI

Sponsor: Harbin

Status: Passed the Senate Higher Education Committee; pending in Senate Rules

Senate Bill 295 - requires local school systems to maintain and publish a registry of all contracts worth more than \$10,000.00 involving the use of any state funds, requires such information to be included on the contract registry, and requires local boards of education to adopt policies and to provide for enforcement.

Sponsor: Anavitarte

Status: Passed the Senate Education and Youth Committee; pending in Senate Rules

7) Homestead Tax Bills

House Bill 92 - The current version of the bill, includes a provision the requires local governments, including school boards that have opted out to complete the three public hearings and pass a resolution annually to remain opted out.

Sponsors: Blackmon

Status: Passed the House; pending in the Senate Rules Committee

House Bill 370– This bill relates to ad valorem property tax bill form to require the property tax bill for any school district that opts out of the state-wide base year homestead exemption to state the total amount of the school district's reserve funds.

Sponsor: Gaines

Status: Passed the House Ways and Means Committee; pending in House Rules

8) School Vouchers/Private School Scholarships

House Bill 328– This bill increases the annual aggregate limit from \$120 million to \$200 million for tax credits available for certain contributions to student scholarship organizations.

Sponsor: Carpenter

Status: Passed the House Ways and Means Committee; pending in House Rules

Senate Bill 152– This bill expands SB 233 (2024 session) to allow biological or adopted children of individuals who have been foster parents in the last ten years to qualify for vouchers regardless of their school attendance zones. Foster children will not qualify.

Sponsor: Dolezal

Status: Passed the Senate; pending in House Education Committee