**UEN Legislative Update
March 1, 2024**

This UEN Weekly Report from the 2024 Legislative Session includes:

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**Teacher Pay in the House**

[**HF 2630**](https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislation/BillBook?ga=90&ba=HF%202630) **Teacher and Education Support Pay** was approved in the House Appropriations Committee and moves to the House Calendar. The bill impacts three distinct areas of wages for school employees:

* Sets minimum teacher pay for FY 2024-25 at $47,500 and increases that to $50,000 for the FY 2025-26 school year. Requires DOM to calculate TSS per pupil necessary for each district to reach minimums, including the employer’s share of FICA and IPERS.
* Sets minimum hourly wages for education support personnel at $15 per hour. The bill appropriates $14 million for hourly pay for FY 2025, but caps the state expense at $14 million, requiring DOM to prorate the shortfall to districts if the $14 million is insufficient to cover the cost. Allows TSS to be used for educational support staff costs.
* Appropriates a FY 2024-25 Funding Supplement of $22 million, based on districts’ share of budget enrollment (estimated at $45.50 per pupil), to be used at the school district’s discretion to supplement teacher salaries and salaries and wages of education support personnel in a manner that promotes quality teaching and rewards experience. The amendment embeds this money into TSS, so it will grow by SSA going forward.

The bill was approved by the House Appropriations Committee unanimously and moved to the House Calendar. UEN supports. Thank House members for making the $22 million appropriation permanent!

**AEA Reform Amended and Passed by the House**

[**HF 2612**](https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislation/BillBook?ba=HSB%20713&ga=90) **AEA Reform** was amended and approved 53 to 41 in the House, sending it to the Senate.It contains the following Divisions with changes made by amendment [H-8107](https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislation/BillBook?ga=90&ba=H-8107) (*which are described in italics*):

**Division I DE Oversight**: creates a Division of Special Education in the DE. Defines the 13 FTES in Des Moines and requires 5 FTEs in each AEA for compliance for the FY 2024-25 school year (this is a smaller expansion of the DE than the Governor’s plan which was estimated to include 139 FTEs and the Senate Plan). *H-8107 strikes the requirement for 5 FTEs per AEA and instead requires, as determined by the Division of Special Education, but not to exceed 40 total positions statewide to be distributed commensurate with school district enrollment in the AEA.*

**Division II AEA Provisions:** Requires AEA Boards to be advisory and requires AEAs be under “general supervision of the DE director”. Allows districts to contract with an AEA for services. *H-8107 allows districts to contract with their own AEA or a contiguous AEA for educational, media or special education services, but requires districts to receive all of their contracted services from the same AEA.*

Requires DE Director to approve evidence-based professional development offered by AEAs*. H-8107 requires DE to develop and distribute a list of evidence-based PD services that an AEA may provide to school districts, nonpublic schools and AEAs. Requires the DE director to grant approval to an AEA to provide PD not on the list.*

Requires EA administrators to have a teaching license with a special education endorsement or a special education support personnel authorization by July 1, 2025. Limits the AEA chief administrator salary to no more than 100% of the average of superintendents in the AEA effective July 1, 2024. *H-8107 strikes this requirement and instead requires the chief administrator to have, beginning July 1, 2025, a PK-12 superintendent and AEA administrator authorization and either a special education supervisor authorization or a director of special education authorization issued by the BOEE. Limits the compensation of the AEA chief administrator to no more than 125% of average superintendent salary in the AEA excluding shared superintendents. Prohibits the salary of the chief administrator from being reduced during the initial term of an employment agreement.*

Requires the AEA to submit the AEA budget to the Director of the DE by March 1 annually, who approves the budget and by March 15 submits it to the state BOE for approval. *H-8107 requires the AEA to submit quarterly reports to school districts including a monetary accounting of payments the AEA received from the district, special ed services provides by the AEA to the district, services provided under Part C of IDEA, children find services, general supervision services and services provided to nonpublic and charter schools.*

*H-8107 changes AEA Board membership, requiring a majority of the board to be superintendents, requiring all AEA board members to reside in the AEA boundaries and be elected by area school districts by director district. Requires a director district convention be called to elect a superintendent from within the director district as a new board member to fill a vacancy. Applies board member changes to those board members elected on or after July 1, 2024 and provides for transitional changes until the full membership of the AEA board meets the new expectations, including power of the AEA board to act short of the quorum specified by the new requirements.*

If accreditation deficiencies are not corrected, requires the DE Director (rather than the AEA Board) to take one of two actions 1) merge the deficient program with another AEA’s program or 2) contract with another AEA or public educational institution for purposes of the program delivery. Requires new AEA Accreditation Standards (almost identical to Senate list of standards) primarily in areas to provide support to school districts for improving instruction and lowering student achievement gaps for students with disabilities and state and federal compliance. *H-8107 changes the accreditation standards required in five areas to be centered, instead of exclusively on students with disabilities, to all students, including students with disabilities.*

**Division II Task Force** to study AEAs and make recommendations on AEA property, media, education and special education services, what services AEAs should provide, special education services provided by the DE’s Division of Special Education, the overall organizational structure of special education services delivery, oversight of AEAs, accreditation standards, the timeline for changing staffing and oversight, and specifies task force members*. H-8107 requires the task force to study and make recommendations related to the amount of compensation paid to AEA administrators, core services provided by AEAs and how best to fund services, including 1) crises response services 2) media services for nonpublics 3) PD 4) cooperative purchasing 5) regional planning partnerships 6) CTE/Perkins services 7) ESSA services 8) special education equipment services. The task force is also required to study and make recommendations re 1) AEA facilities and property 2) media, educational and special education services provided by each AEA 3) what services AEAs school provide 4) current accountability measures applied to AEAs 5) special education provided by the DE Division of Special Education, AEAs and school districts 6) overall organizational structure that determines how special education services are provided to students in Iowa 7) how AEA operation is overseen 8) Accreditation standards for AEAs 9) timeline for modifications to staffing numbers of AEA and transition of responsibilities related to oversight of AEAs. Specifies voting members of the task force (including various stakeholders from districts of various sizes, and includes one member appointed by the Governor, one appointed by the DE Director, and the chief administrator of Heartland AEA). Also includes Senators and Representatives that are ex officio, nonvoting members. Requires the findings reported by Dec. 31, 2024 and requires the report to include an examination and evaluation of the impact to AEAs and their operations and services made by this Act.*

**Division III Funding:** Beginning July 1, 2025, districts get Education Services, Media Services and Special Education Services funding. Requires special education services funding be spent on special education services. Allows districts to use media services funding for special education maintenance of effort (MOE), and allows but does not require districts to contract with AEA. Requires districts to contract with AEAs for education services funding for July 1, 2025 but Beginning July 1, 2026, districts are allowed to contract with an AEA for education services, could provide their own or find them elsewhere. Allows districts to use education services funding for MOE. Requires districts to contract with an AEA for special education services. *H-8107 specifies that the contract between the AEA and the district for special education services shall not require the districts to describe the specific services the district will receive and shall not be limited by the amount of funding the school districts provided to the AEA.*

Requires DOM to deduct school districts’ special education services carry forward from future year special education services amount (use it or lose it). Requires DOM to deduct AEA Teacher Salary Supplement per pupil from the school districts’ state aid and sends that to the AEA. Requires DOM to deduct AEA Professional Development Supplement per pupil and sends that to DE for evidence-based PD services.

**Division IV Shared Operational Functions:** Eliminates the ability of AEAs to participate in operational sharing with school districts effective July 1, 2024. *H-8107 strikes this provision.*

**Division V DE Requirements:** Requires DE to provide support to school districts in special education instruction, FAPE information and process to facilitate IEP development , professional learning and support materials and tools for IEP team participants, information to IEP teams that nonpublic school placement is appropriate unless the IEP requires another arrangement (we believe this provision should be amended to also reference federal law), provide professional learning and other materials for meaningful consultation, establish sustainable accountability and data collection systems related to special education to meet federal and state legal requirements and encourage innovative models to meet student needs, and provide an implementation plan for schools relating to strategies for identifying, evaluating and promoting and providing services that improve experiences and outcomes for students with disabilities. *(H 8107 makes no changes to this Division.)*

A [fiscal note](https://www.legis.iowa.gov/docs/publications/FN/1447054.pdf) describes the state funding involved in the changes proposed in HF 2612, which does not include any reference to federal funds. The bill does not remove the responsibility for child find or early access from the AEAs. This table shows the proposed funding shifting from AEAs to school districts:



This bill goes to the Senate, where it is likely to be attached to SF 2398 already on the Senate Calendar. To compare this newest House version to the Senate, see the [AEA Policy Tracking Comparison Chart](https://www.uen-ia.org/system/files/Public/House%20v%20Senate%20Comparison%20AEA%20Overhaul%20Bills%20-%20UEN.xlsx) compiled and posted on the UEN website. UEN is registered undecided.

**SSA Still in the Senate**

[**HF 2613**](https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislation/BillBook?ga=90&ba=HF2613) **SSA,** which establishes a 3% increase in the State Cost Per Pupil, was approved last week in the House, sending it to the Senate, where SF 2258 awaits on the Calendar. See the [Feb. 23 weekly report](https://www.uen-ia.org/capitol-update-february-23-2024) for details of the bill. SF 2258 does not have a percentage increase specified. It is likely that differences in the total cost of various teacher pay proposals and other state budget priorities are influencing differences in school funding totals, as the House, Senate and Governor strive for consensus on the SSA rate. The revised property tax deadlines and processes from last year’s property tax reform have created additional pressures on school district budget decisions. It is important to communicate with Senators this weekend and early next week to communicate the urgency of getting SSA to the Governor’s desk. UEN is registered in support of HF 2613, which is the highest increase proposed and in concert with HF 2611 Teacher Pay Investments, would exceed the current inflation rate.

**House and Senate Floor Action**

[**SF 2206**](https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislation/BillBook?ga=90&ba=sf2206) **Charter School Activities**: requires a student in a virtual charter school be allowed to participate in extracurricular activities at the school in the district of residence. Allows the district to charge the charter school up to $250 per activity for up to 2 activities. Allows charter school under the group-state board model to make an agreement with other schools for interscholastic activities for its students. Requires the student to comply with eligibility, conduct and other district requirements for enrolled students. Applies to interscholastic athletics, music, drama, and any other activity with a general fund expenditure exceeding $5,000 annually. Allows the school district to charge the student a fee for activities if the district charges enrolled students. Allows the district to allow additional activities at the discretion of the district. Passed 47-0, goes to the House. UEN is undecided.

[**SF 2388**](https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislation/BillBook?ga=90&ba=sf2388) **Administrator Contracts**: requires that contracts between school boards and school administrators include a statement that severance payments will not be made to an administrator if found liable in a criminal proceeding that is related to the duties of the administrators. Applies to contracts entered into or continued after the effective date of the bill. Passed 47-0, goes to the House. UEN is undecided.

[**HF 2299**](https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislation/BillBook?ga=90&ba=hf2299) **Open Records:** allows a government to provide an open record in a reasonable format rather than in the requested format. Does not require the government to supply a record that is available on the government’s website, and allows the government to send a notice of the availability on the Internet. Passed 91-6, over to the Senate. UEN supports.

[**HF 2398**](https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislation/BillBook?ga=90&ba=hf2398) **Public Officer Bond:** allows a public officer to purchase an insurance policy instead of posting a bond. Requires the policy to substantially meet the bond requirements. Allows for reasonable expenses of the insurance policy to be paid by the government (to the extent the expenses of the bond would be covered). Allows an officer who fails to post a bond to be suspended for failing to do so and be removed after a reasonable time if bond is not posted. Amended to allow AEA board members to be covered by insurance. Passed 97-0, over to the Senate. UEN supports.

[**HF 2544**](https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislation/BillBook?ga=90&ba=hf2544) **Social Studies and Regents: s**pecifies social studies topics for grades 1-6. Specifies topics for 7-12 social studies including civics, US & Iowa history, western civilization and economics. Includes additional requirements on the curriculum for 9-12. Requires universities to require students to pass a civics exam not developed by the teacher before admittance. Prohibits universities from rewarding credit for courses that require political activism. Amended to include the Holocaust/antisemitism content from another bill. Passed 58-37, over to the Senate. UEN is opposed.

[**HF 2553**](https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislation/BillBook?ga=90&ba=hf2553) **Athletic Participation:** requires public schools to allow a private school student who lives in the school district to participate in extracurricular athletic activities immediately, pursuant to an agreement between the private school and the public school. If the school charges a fee for enrolled students, specifies that the private student’s parents are responsible for the fee. Prohibits the athletic associations from taking the enrollment of the private school into consideration when determining classes. Passed 56-39, over to the Senate. UEN is undecided.

[**HF 2586**](https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislation/BillBook?ga=90&ba=hf2586) **School Guards and Guns:** current law allows school boards to determine whether staff should be allowed to carry guns. In the few cases where it was attempted, there was no insurance coverage for the school district; which is a good indication that negative results are possible. The bill states that the staff member has immunity from liability. Adds a professional carry certification training for staff members authorized by the school district to carry guns. The original bill would have mandated every school district with over 8,000 students enrolled be required to have a school resource officer or private security office in every high school. That original language was removed, allowing school boards to opt out of the SRO requirement. Passed 58-37, over to the Senate. Although originally opposed, with the amendment to remove the mandate, UEN is now undecided.

[**HF 2617**](https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislation/BillBook?ga=90&ba=hf2617) **Pregnancy Education:** requires human growth and development courses in grades 7-8 and 9-12 to include human growth and biology related to pregnancy, human development inside the womb, a high-definition ultrasound at least 3 minutes in length showing organ development, and a video showing the development in the womb, which is specified as the “Baby Olivia” video or another comparable to it. Passed 56-39, over to the Senate. UEN is opposed.

[**HF 2150**](https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislation/BillBook?ga=90&ba=hf2150) **Transitional Coaching:** strikes the requirement that a person seeking a transitional coaching authorization complete a course on professional responsibilities development by BOEE. Passed 63-32, over to the Senate. UEN is undecided.

[**HF 2278**](https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislation/BillBook?ga=90&ba=hf2278) **Open Enrollment Transportation:** allows a receiving district with fewer than 2,000 students to send a bus not more than 2 miles into the district of residence to pick up an open-enrolled student if the student lives closer to the school the student attends than the school of residence. Retaliation option: allows a receiving district of more than 2,000 students to send a bus into a contiguous district if that district is less than 2,000 students, and the district of residence has sent vehicles into the receiving district. The bill was amended to allow receiving and sending school districts to reach an agreement on sending transportation into the district of residence. Passed 92-3, over to the Senate. UEN is undecided.

[**HF 2393**](https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislation/BillBook?ga=90&ba=hf2393) **Student Dental Exam:** exempts dental exams for students from restrictions on physical exams, similar to exemptions for hearing and vision. Passed 92-3, over to the Senate. UEN supports.

[**HF 2465**](https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislation/BillBook?ga=90&ba=hf2465) **Agricultural Classes as Science: a**llows high school agricultural classes to include units that meet science curriculum requirements. Requires the State Board of Education to adopt rules. The bill was amended to limit the credit application to two units and to also include a math credit option. Prohibits the State Board of Education from waiving certain requirements. Passed 95-0, over to the Senate. UEN supports.

[**HF 2545**](https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislation/BillBook?ga=90&ba=hf2545) **DE High School Review:** Requires DE to review high school graduation requirements, core content, core curriculum and to make policy recommendations. The recommendations must include:

* a plan to regularly review and revise English language arts, math, science, and social studies core content standards (including a focus on US history, western civilization, and civics)
* a plan to make Iowa’s educational standards the best in the nation
* input from relevant stakeholders (including teachers and parents)
* increase the quality of instructional curriculum and maximize local flexibility in graduation requirements and course offerings while maintaining the goal of all HS graduates having necessary skills at graduation, including sufficient knowledge of civics, opportunities to equip high school graduates with sufficient knowledge of civics and US history and the US Constitution, so that high school students are capable of discharging the responsibilities of citizenship.
* a statewide literacy plan to increase student proficiency using systematic and sequential approaches to teacher phonetic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency and text comprehension (components of the Science of Reading)

Requires the report of recommendation to the General Assembly by December 2024. Requires the DE to include an internet link for comments by the public and stakeholders. Passed 61-34, over to the Senate. UEN is undecided.

[**HF 2615**](https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislation/BillBook?ga=90&ba=hf2615) **College Information to HS Students: r**equires community colleges and universities to publish information on income related to different degrees and student loan debt. Requires high schools to give this information to juniors and seniors interested in college. Makes the school college and career transition counselor (if a school district has one) responsible for sharing this information with students. Excludes a shared college and career counselor from counting against the 21-student limited weighting for operational sharing. Passed 95-0, over to the Senate. UEN is undecided.

**Committee Action**

[**HF 2631**](https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislation/BillBook?ba=HF%202631&ga=90) **Therapeutic Classroom Funds:** authorizes the DE to transfer any remaining funds from the appropriation for reimbursement of transportation claims for therapeutic classroom services to the Therapeutic Classroom Incentive fund. Approved by the House Appropriations Committee, 24-0; Moves to the House Calendar. UEN supports.

[**SF 2398**](https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislation/BillBook?ba=SF%202398&ga=90) **Income Tax**: The Senate Ways and Means Committee amended the Governor’s Income Tax Proposal, which, as amended, includes the following:

* Replaces the graduated personal income tax rates with flat rates of 3.65% for 2024 and 3.50% for 2025 and beyond.
* Repeals the alternate income tax rates that are available for taxpayers whose income marginally exceeds the filing thresholds.
* Removes the inflation adjustments for income tax brackets and other dollar amounts due to the flat rate structure.
* Provides that withholding rates shall not be higher than the flat rates for each tax year.
* Here's the real impact: Takes the marginal rate effective of 3.9% in 2026 and reduces it to 3.5% flat rate a year earlier and eliminates brackets and AMT calculations.

The bill will likely have a fiscal note assigned soon, estimating the impact to the state General Fund of the proposed income tax reduction. A similar bill, HSB 543 Income Tax Reduction, is still in the House Ways and Means Committee, assigned a Subcommittee of Reps. Kaufmann, Bloomingdale, Jacoby, Johnson and Wilson. UEN is opposed.

**Advocacy Actions This Week on School Funding, AEA Reform Changes, Charter School/Open Enrollment Equity and State-Mandated Curriculum:**

**Adequate School Funding:** Contact legislators regarding SSA, the House’s 3% alone would fall short but the commitment to fund teacher salary increases and an additional and sustainable appropriation of $22 million is good. See the UEN Issue Brief for additional information.Contact Senators and ask them to support House recommendation of 3% soon, and confirm a commitment for additional teacher pay. Additional supports:

School districts are up against new property tax publication timelines, which are extremely difficult to meet with the lack of certainty about how much funding will be available. Different SSA rates result in different property tax rates, which have to be communicated to the public. The deadline to report to the county for the mailing of property tax statements is March 15.

See the UEN website for an [UEN Issue Brief](https://www.uen-ia.org/system/files/Public/IssueBriefs/UEN%20Issue%20Brief%20SSA%20adequate%20school%20funding%202024.pdf) providing education funding history, comparing total Iowa education expenditures per pupil, which most recently ranked our state as 35th in the nation, now spending more than $3,000 per student LESS than the national average, and including some talking points to help you advocate with your legislators. *UEN’s Legislative Priority supports an SSA rate that at least matches the inflation rate schools are experiencing.*

**FY 2025** [ISFIS New Authority Calculator](https://www.iowaschoolfinance.com/system/files/members/Public/New%20Authority%20Report%20FY%202025.xlsx) allows users to set the SSA rate and calculate the impact for all districts for FY 2025 on your regular program (not including special education or other supplemental weightings or categoricals). Enter the SSA percentage increase and your Budget Enrollment and you can compare to the new money you’d receive if the SSA rate matched inflation (either 3.1% for CPI and 4% for Core Inflation) compared to the 3% set by HF 2613.

**AEA and Teacher Pay Bill: t**he House version has longer implementation timelines and a smaller transfer of power to the Department of Education, but does not give districts local control over special education flow-through dollars (requires those services be contracted through an AEA). The House amendment also limits school districts to contracting with only one AEA, which could limit opportunities for school districts to continue to buy Power School accounting software from Grant Wood AEA and buy school lunch ingredients at competitive prices through the purchasing cooperative operated by Keystone AEA, as examples. Keep talking about the priorities of local control, limited state government authority, sensible timelines, and ensured provision of district and AEA capacity to provide needed services for students with disabilities.

**Quality Preschool and Other UEN Priorities:** In every communication, find a way to mention Quality Preschool, and Teacher and other Staff Shortages. [SF 2383](https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislation/BillBook?ga=90&ba=SF%202383) Expanded Preschool is on the Senate Calendar may be in trouble due to the estimated impact of the bill on the state budget. The bill is phased in over two years, up to 1.0 weighting for students below 185% of the federal poverty level. Contact Senators to support it. Find Issue Briefs and other resources on the UEN Advocacy website to find talking points or other resources to share when you meet with policymakers.

**Charter School and Open Enrollment Funding and Right of First Refusal on School District Property:** UEN is opposed to these bills, HF 2543 on the House Calendar and SF 2368 on the Senate Calendar, which would require categorical funds TSS, PD and EICS to follow students to both charter schools and receiving districts. These bills also require school districts, when selling or leasing property, to grant Charter Schools the right of first refusal, regardless of economic development or community housing or child care needs that might be more appropriate for the use of the property. See the article and description in the [Feb. 23 weekly report](https://www.uen-ia.org/system/files/Public/2024-Reports/UEN%20Weekly%20Report%202024.02.23.docx). Encourage members in both chambers to limit the impact, avoid furthering other inequities, and study the implications during the School Finance Interim Committee this Fall.

**State Mandated Curriculum**: there are several bills UEN opposes that mandate specific curriculum, which is the purview of the school board. The state's role is to set academic standards. Local leaders know best how to provide curriculum and content relevant to students and the community. When curriculum is mandated in the Iowa Code, shifting to updated content and new models of instruction is difficult if not prohibitive. UEN is opposed to HF 2544 Social Studies Curriculum and HF 2617 Human Growth and Development Curriculum described above. Both are on the Senate Calendar, so reach out to Senators to oppose them.

**Connecting with Legislators:** To call and leave a message at the Statehouse during the legislative session, the House switchboard operator number is 515.281.3221 and the Senate switchboard operator number is 515.281.3371. You can ask if they are available or leave a message for them to call you back. You can also ask them what’s the best way to contact them during session. They may prefer email or text message or phone call based on their personal preferences.

Find biographical information about legislators gleaned from their election websites on the ISFIS site here: <http://www.iowaschoolfinance.com/legislative_bios>. Learn about your new representatives and senators or find out something you don’t know about incumbents.

Find out who your legislators are through the interactive map or address search posted on the Legislative Website here: <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislators/find>

**UEN Advocacy Resources:** Check out the UEN Website at [www.uen-ia.org](http://www.uen-ia.org) to find Issue Briefs, UEN Weekly Update Legislative Reports and Videos, UEN Calls to Action when immediate advocacy action is required, testimony presented to the State Board of Education, the DE or any legislative committee or public hearing, and links to fiscal information that may inform your work. The latest legislative actions from the Statehouse will be posted at: [www.uen-ia.org/blogs-list](http://www.uen-ia.org/blogs-list). See the [2024 UEN Advocacy Handbook](https://www.uen-ia.org/advocacy-handbook), which is also available from the subscriber section of the UEN website.

Contact us with any questions, feedback or suggestions to better prepare your advocacy work:

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