

## **Senate Education Committee Meeting**

**Official Minutes  
151<sup>st</sup> General Assembly  
First Session**

**Committee Meeting  
Tuesday, June 15, 2021  
11:30 a.m.  
Virtual Zoom Meeting**

### **Meeting Attendance**

#### **Committee Members:**

#### **Present:**

Senator Laura Sturgeon	<a href="mailto:Laura.Sturgeon@delaware.gov">Laura.Sturgeon@delaware.gov</a>	302-744-4135
Senator Elizabeth Lockman	<a href="mailto:Elizabeth.Lockman@delaware.gov">Elizabeth.Lockman@delaware.gov</a>	302-744-4168
Senator Colin Bonini	<a href="mailto:Colin.Bonini@delaware.gov">Colin.Bonini@delaware.gov</a>	302-744-4169
Senator David Sokola	<a href="mailto:David.Sokola@delaware.gov">David.Sokola@delaware.gov</a>	302-744-4139
Senator Bryan Townsend	<a href="mailto:Bryan.Townsend@delaware.gov">Bryan.Townsend@delaware.gov</a>	302-744-4165
Senator Ernesto Lopez	<a href="mailto:Ernesto.Lopez@delaware.gov">Ernesto.Lopez@delaware.gov</a>	302-744-4136

#### **Staff:**

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Rebecca Calvello	<a href="mailto:Rebecca.Calvello@delaware.gov">Rebecca.Calvello@delaware.gov</a>	

#### **Attendees:**

#### **Email:**

#### **Organization:**

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**Agenda:**

HB 100 w/ HA 2  
 HB 173 w/ HA 1  
 HB 86  
 HB 178 w/ HA 1  
 HS 1 for HB 92  
 HB 175 w/ HA 2

**Senator Sturgeon** convened the meeting at 11:05 a.m.

The Committee approved the meeting minutes of June 8, 2021.

**I. HB 100 w/ HA 2 (Longhurst) – AN ACT TO AMEND TITLE 14 OF THE DELAWARE CODE RELATING TO FREE PUBLIC SCHOOLS.**

**Synopsis:** *This Act establishes a mental health services unit for Delaware elementary schools. The unit is at a ratio of 250 full-time equivalent students grades K-5 for a full-time school counselor, school social worker, or licensed clinical social worker. Additionally a unit ratio of 700 full time equivalent students for grades K-5 for employment of a full-time school psychologist. This Act defines “mental health services” as prevention, response, and coordination services delivered to students in elementary schools. Mental Health disorders are the most common health problem for school aged youth. According to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), one in five youth are affected by a mental health disorder. Additionally, 50% of lifetime mental illnesses begin by age 14. Untreated mental illness leads to negative outcomes including increased risk*

*of dropout, homelessness, substance abuse, other chronic illnesses, incarceration, and possibly suicide. According to the National Alliance on Mental Health, ninety percent of people who have taken their own life have had an underlying mental health condition, and suicides are on the rise. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, suicides are now the second leading cause of death for youth ages 10-14. Delaware schools need trained and experienced mental health professionals to provide prevention and support programs and services to students. Currently, as reported by Delaware school districts, 86% of elementary schools do not employ a school social worker, and ratios of students to school counselors and school psychologists far exceed national best practices. This bill will lower ratios and increase access to mental health services for elementary school students.*

**Senator Marie Pinkney** introduced the bill as its prime sponsor in the Senate. She read the synopsis and emphasized the need for increased access to mental health services for elementary school students.

**Senator Sturgeon** express her support for the bill as a Senate co-prime sponsor and drew on her personal experiences with her students to testify as to why the legislation was necessary.

**Senator Lockman** said she supported the bill and expressed her appreciation for the bill's sponsors being accommodating to initial concerns that were held by the Redding Consortium.

**Secretary Susan Bunting** expressed support for the bill on behalf of the Department of Education.

**Emily Cunningham** said that DOE was committed to working with the sponsor to make sure that the bill was funded appropriately.

**Senator Sturgeon** opened the floor to public comment.

**Kendall Massett** of the Delaware Charter Schools Network spoke in favor of the bill on her organization's behalf.

**Robert Overmiller** spoke against the legislation.

**Pam Weir** of the Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens spoke in favor of the bill on her organization's behalf.

**Dr. Tammy Croce** of DASA spoke in favor of the legislation on behalf of her organization.

**Kathleen Baker** of the League of Women Voters spoke in favor of the bill on behalf of her organization.

Kristin Dwyer of the DSEA spoke in favor of the bill on behalf of her organization and thanked the bill's sponsors.

Dr. John Marinucci spoke in favor of the bill on behalf of the Delaware School Boards Association and thanked the bill's sponsors.

**HB 100 w/ HA 2 was reported out of the Committee: 1 Favorable; 4 on its Merits; 0 Unfavorable**

- II. **HB 173 w/ HA 1 (Chukwuocha) – AN ACT TO AMEND TITLE 14 OF THE DELAWARE CODE RELATING TO EDUCATION ENROLLMENT OF MILITARY-CONNECTED STUDENTS.**  
*Synopsis:* This Act allows the parent or guardian of a military-connected student to preliminarily enroll the student by remote registration in a school district where the parent or guardian is in the active military of the United States or in full-time status during active service with a force of the Delaware National Guard, if the parent or guardian is being transferred to Delaware under military orders and is transferred to or is pending transfer to a military installation within Delaware.

Senator Sokola spoke favorably of the bill and mentioned that he had asked to be added as a cosponsor of the legislation but had not been added. He said that the bill was a reasonable request for the welfare of students and military families.

Senator Sturgeon spoke in favor of the bill.

Christopher Arnold from the Department of Defense spoke as the expert witness for the bill. He said that the bill had the full support of the US Department of Defense and thanked the bill's prime sponsors for their work on the legislation. He noted that school districts around Dover Air Force Base had already enacted this practice. He thanked Lori Sisk for her hard work on behalf of US servicemembers.

Susan Haberstroh of the Interstate Compact on Education for Children of Military Families spoke in favor of the bill.

Sen. Sokola noted that the bill was the least legislators could do for the military who serves them and reiterated his request to be added as a cosponsor.

Sen. Sturgeon opened the floor to public comment.

Kendall Massett spoke in favor of the bill on behalf of the DCSN.

Robert Overmiller spoke in favor of the bill.

**HB 173 w/ HA 1 was reported out of the Committee: 1 Favorable; 4 on its Merits; 0 Unfavorable**

**III. HB 86 (Williams) – AN ACT TO AMEND TITLE 14 OF THE DELAWARE CODE RELATING TO SPECIAL EDUCATION FUNDING.**

**Synopsis:** This Act provides increased funding for kindergarten through third grade students identified as eligible for basic special education services. Currently, basic special education is provided for students in fourth through twelfth grade who are identified as eligible for basic special education and related services; there is no additional unit funding for students in kindergarten through third grade who may be eligible for basic special education services. The Act adds a designation of “K-3 Basic Special Education (basic)” and over three years reduces the number of students comprising a unit from the current 16.2 to 8.4. This Act will increase the unit count funding for K-3 Basic Special Education (basic) students by School Year 2023-2024, Fiscal Year 2024, to be consistent with the 8.4 unit of pupils currently available to students in grades 4 through 12. Sections 1 through 3 of this Act change the funding chart currently in the Code to subsections and provides for a decrease in the ratio between the number of students enrolled and the unit count for basic special education from 16.2 currently to 12.2 in Fiscal Year 2022, 10.2 in Fiscal Year 2023, and 8.4 in Fiscal Year 2024. Section 4 of this Act delays the effect of each Section until the start of each new fiscal year in the 3-year cycle over which this Act’s changes are intended to occur.

Sen. Sturgeon deferred to Senator Nicole Poore to introduce the bill.

Sen. Poore read the synopsis of the bill.

Sen. Sturgeon spoke in favor of the bill.

Sec. Bunting thanked the sponsors for drafting the bill and expressed support for the legislation.

Representative Kim Williams noted that districts and charters are required to provide the services mentioned in the bill regardless of the funding available. She thanked the bill’s supporters and asked for its release from Committee.

Sen. Sturgeon then opened the floor to public comment.

Kendall Massett spoke in favor of the bill on behalf of the DCSN.

Dr. John Marinucci spoke in favor of the bill on behalf of the DSBA.

Pam Weir spoke in favor of the bill on behalf of the GACEC.

Robert Overmiller said the legislation was a good move in the right direction.

Dr. Tammy Croce spoke in favor of the bill on behalf of DASA.

Kristin Dwyer spoke in favor of the bill on behalf of DSEA.

Sarah Bucic spoke in favor of the bill on behalf of the Delaware PTA.

Dawn Alexander spoke in favor of the bill.

**HB 86 was reported out of the Committee: 1 Favorable; 4 on its Merits; 0 Unfavorable**

**IV. HB 178 w/ HA 1 (Williams) – AN ACT TO AMEND TITLE 14 OF THE DELAWARE CODE RELATING TO YEAR-LONG TEACHER RESIDENCY PROGRAMS.**

*Synopsis:* Year-long teacher residency programs are a partnership between an educator preparation program and a Delaware school district or charter school to provide a year-long immersive experience for teacher candidates, allowing them a full and supported, on the ground experience of teaching in a Delaware school. The teacher resident also receives a stipend while participating in the program, which may be used to defray education and living expenses. These programs are the gold standard for teacher preparation and they assist in attracting and retaining quality, diverse educators. For the last several years, the General Assembly has appropriated funds in the annual budget to support and sustain these programs. This bill codifies the program and establishes guidelines for how and when the funds will be awarded and what they may be used for. The Department of Education continues to be charged with administration of the funds.

Representative Kim Williams introduced the bill as its prime sponsor and read out its synopsis. She introduced Maggie Brady and Tameka Wingo to testify in favor of the bill. She noted that Maggie was the daughter of Representative Gerald Brady.

Maggie Brady spoke to the value of year-long teacher residency programs and urged release of the bill from Committee.

Tameka Wingo echoed Maggie's comments and spoke in favor of the legislation, thanking the sponsors.

Sen. Sturgeon spoke in favor of the bill, drawing on her personal experience as an educator to speak as to why it was necessary.

Representative Gerald Brady logged on to say hello to his daughter, Maggie.

Jon Neubauer from the Department of Education spoke on the bill as an expert witness. He said that DOE was fully supportive of the legislation and was necessary to strengthen education preparation for Delaware's educators.

Sen. Sturgeon opened the floor to public comment.

Kendall Massett spoke in favor of the legislation.

Dr. Tammy Croce spoke in favor of the legislation on behalf of DASA.

Robert Overmiller spoke in support of the legislation.

Dr. John Marinucci spoke in support of the legislation on behalf of DSBA.

Erika Gutierrez spoke in favor of the bill on behalf of DelawareCAN.

**HB 178 w/ HA 1 was reported out of the Committee: 1 Favorable; 4 on its Merits; 0 Unfavorable**

**V. HS 1 for HB 92 (Baumbach) – AN ACT TO AMEND TITLE 14 OF THE DELAWARE CODE RELATING TO THE TERM OF SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS.**

**Synopsis:** House Bill No. 92 reduces the term of a member elected to a school board from 5 years to 4 years for members elected after December 31, 2021. House Substitute No. 1 for House Bill No. 92 differs from House Bill No. 92 because it clarifies that under § 1052(c) of Title 14, 2 members of a school board may be elected in the same year when the terms of both members expire the same year. This Act also makes technical corrections to conform existing law to the standards of the Delaware Legislative Drafting Manual.

Representative Paul Baumbach spoke as the bill's prime sponsor. He said that the purpose of the bill was to ensure transparency and accountability for elected school board members.

Sen. Sturgeon spoke in favor of the bill as its Senate prime sponsor.

**Sen. Sokola** said that he had heard from school board members who thought that this legislation was a good idea. He expressed his support for the legislation.

**Emily Cunningham** noted that the DOE was neutral on the legislation.

**Sen. Sturgeon** opened the floor to public comment.

**Dr. John Marinucci** said that the DSBA was strongly opposed to the legislation. He said that the organization did not understand the rationale for shortening terms and that the commitment of school board members to their communities should not be decreased.

**Robert Overmiller** expressed his support for the legislation and thanked Rep. Baumbach for sponsoring it.

**Sarah Bucic** spoke in favor of the legislation – without amendment – on behalf of the Delaware PTA.

**Erika Gutierrez** spoke in favor of the legislation on behalf of DelawareCAN.

**Britney Mumford** spoke in favor of the legislation on behalf of DelawareCAN.

**Mary Schorse** spoke in favor of the legislation.

**Kathleen Baker** spoke in favor of the legislation on behalf of the League of Women Voters.

**HS 1 for HB 92 was reported out of the Committee: 1 Favorable; 4 on its Merits; 0 Unfavorable**

**VI. HB 175 w/ HA 2 (Morrison) – AN ACT TO AMEND TITLE 14 OF THE DELAWARE CODE RELATING TO SCHOOL ATTENDANCE.**

**Synopsis:** This Act allows one excused absence per school year for students grades 6 through 12 to attend civic engagements such as visits to the United States Capitol, Legislative Hall, and sites of political and cultural significance, or participation in a rally, march, protest, or walkout. For a student to attend a civic engagement event, the student’s parent or guardian must provide written permission no later than 3 school days prior to the student’s planned absence. The school shall determine what is acceptable as written permission. If the principal or another school or school district official does not confirm receipt of written permission with the parent or guardian prior to the student’s planned absence, permission for the student to attend the civic engagement event as an excused absence is presumed.

**Senator Sturgeon** introduced the bill as the Senate prime sponsor. She read its synopsis and noted that it enjoyed bipartisan support in the House.

**Senator Sokola** said he thought the bill was a good idea and noted that some schools already enable this practice.

**Sec. Bunting** said that the Department of Education was neutral on the bill.

**Sen. Sturgeon** then opened the floor to public comment.

**Robert Overmiller** spoke against the legislation.

**Britney Mumford** spoke in favor of the legislation on behalf of DelawareCAN.

**Kathleen Baker** spoke in favor of the legislation on behalf of the League of Women Voters.

**Erika Gutierrez** spoke in favor of the bill.

**HB 175 w/ HA 2 was reported out of the Committee: 1 Favorable; 4 on its Merits; 0 Unfavorable**

**Senator Sokola** motioned to adjourn the meeting and **Senator Lockman** seconded the motion.

**Senator Sturgeon** adjourned the meeting at 1:35 p.m.