



KIMBERLY A. WILLIAMS
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
19th District

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STATE OF DELAWARE
411 LEGISLATIVE AVENUE
DOVER, DELAWARE 19901**

COMMITTEES
Education, Chair
Labor, Vice-Chair
Appropriations
Housing & Community Affairs
Joint Finance
Manufactured Housing
Revenue & Finance

House Education Committee Meeting Minutes

6.8.22

This committee meeting has been recorded and may be accessed via legis.delaware.gov

Chair Williams called the meeting to order at 3:05 p.m. Members present included Vice Chair Chukwuocha, Second Vice Chair Matthews and Reps. Bolden, Briggs King, Bush, Collins, Hensley, Kowalko, Lynn, Moore, Morrison, Osienski, Postles, Ramone, and Shupe. For a list of public comments, please see the speaker list below.

Chair Williams introduced **HB 430, AN ACT TO AMEND TITLE 14 OF THE DELAWARE CODE RELATING TO GROW YOUR OWN EDUCATOR PROGRAM.**

Chair Williams referenced an article titled “How do you combat a teacher shortage? One Delaware district may have an answer” by Jeff Neiburg. This article discussed the declining enrollment in education programs and dwindling workforce which will result in about 270,000 teachers leaving the field between 2016 to 2026. According to the Center for American Progress, more than one third fewer students enrolled in teacher prep programs in 2018 than in 2010. In Delaware, a quarter of the State’s education workers will be eligible for retirement in the next five years. HB 430 provides a framework for the Delaware Department of Education (DDOE) to invest in district and charter school’s grow you grow initiatives. Chair Williams stated that the purpose of the bill is to address the teacher shortage and increase teacher diversity by supporting educator recruitment in high schools. This bill will help Delaware public schools develop educators who represent their communities as they return to their schools. Chair Williams added that this bill builds off HB 178 of the 151st General Assembly.

Chair Williams opened the committee floor to public comment.

Dr. John Marinucci, Executive Director of the Delaware School Boards Association (DSBA), expressed support for the bill.

Dominic Banks on behalf of the Appoquinimink School District voiced support for the bill. Mr. Banks stated that Appoquinimink School District recognized four students who were awarded contracts for educational prep programs.

Robert Overmiller supported the legislation.

Dr. Tammy Croce, Executive Director of the Delaware Association of School Administrators (DASA), stated support for the bill.

Dr. Jennifer Alexander, Director of Child Development at Colonial School District, expressed support for the bill. Ms. Alexander stated her experience with facilitating teacher residency programs and how they provide a consistent pipeline of teachers and paraprofessionals. Colonial School District has begun to explore teacher academy recruitment from middle school to high school.

A motion was made by Rep. Briggs King and seconded by Rep. Hensley to release HB 430 from committee; the motion carried. Yes= 16 (Bolden, Briggs King, Bush, Chukwuocha, Collins, Hensley, Kowalko, Lynn, Matthews, Moore, Morrison, Osienski, Postles, Ramone, Shupe, and Williams) No=0; Absent= 2 (Heffernan and Smith). The bill was released from committee with a F=6, M=10, U=0 vote

Chair Williams introduced **HB 441, AN ACT TO AMEND TITLE 14 OF THE DELAWARE CODE RELATING TO EDUCATOR LICENSURE AND CERTIFICATION.**

Chair Williams stated that HB 441 will provide educators a chance to remain qualified despite missing the Praxis II cutoff score by a few points. As the State faces a teacher shortage, this bill allows students the opportunity to gain experience rather than being held back. Chair Williams explained that in 2021 a working group brought forth this regulatory solution, however the regulation will take nine months to go into Code. The bill creates a bridge for applicable educators to remain employed until the regulation is passed. This Act provides an alternative means for an educator to demonstrate competency and achieve a standard certificate beyond simply passing a content exam, such as the Praxis II. For those who are within two standard errors of measurement of the passing score, a certificate will be issued if the applicant has either a GPA of 3.5 or higher; or a GPA between 3.0 and 3.49 and demonstrated competency through micro-credentialing, successful completion of a residency, or passing scores on performance assessments. Special education, administrator, and specialist certifications are not available through this alternate measure. This Act sunsets one year after its enactment unless extended through a subsequent act of the General Assembly.

Chair Williams introduced Shelley Rouser, Department of Education Chair at Delaware State University (DSU), and Dr. Tammy Croce, DASA, to answer questions for the committee.

Ms. Rouser stated that the Praxis II has been the sole indicator of content knowledge for educators. DSU found that the Praxis II represents a barrier for teachers amid a teacher shortage crisis. She brought forth examples of dire teachers' shortages in the State. Ms. Rouser explained that teachers were being penalized for being shy of a few points off a passing score. She stated that alternate teacher pathways allow industry professionals to enter classrooms without the need for classroom management training. Ms. Rouser said that the same grace given to alternative teacher pathways should be given to students taking the Praxis II. This bill is not about getting rid of the Praxis II but allowing educators a window of opportunity to continue educating.

Rep. Bolden stated her experience as a retired teacher and how many of her colleagues were held back for missing the Praxis cutoff score by a few points. She added that the Praxis limited the number of diverse teachers allowed to enter the classroom. She asked if students must pass the Praxis test before student teaching.

Ms. Rouser responded that students do have to pass Praxis II to student teach. She stated that this bill will help alleviate pressure on students looking to gain classroom experience. Ms. Rouser explained that universities are responsible for their student's preparedness for the classroom. She added that 70 percent of DSU graduates teach in Delaware, and they are hopeful this bill will increase these numbers.

Rep. Bolden asked if students are now student teaching for a full year.

Ms. Rouser responded that DSU has a teacher residency program.

Rep. Moore recalled her experience taking the Praxis II and how her test anxiety caused her to miss the cutoff score by three points. She noted how failing the Praxis test caused her to miss classroom time and extended her needed education time. Rep. Moore supported the bill and emphasized how it will help several educators go into the field.

Ms. Rouser stated that this bill comes from the work of the Professional Standards Board (PSB), Institutions of Higher Education, DASA, and DDOE.

Rep. Matthews asked for an explanation of micro credentials.

Linnea Bradshaw, Executive Director at Delaware Professional Standards Board, responded that three micro credentials were recognized by the National Education Association (NEA). The micro credential must be in the area of the praxis that the student is seeking relief for. The micro credential chosen to focus on content area standards and linking this to teaching students. As these micro credentials are limited, PSB hopes to expand when content-based credentials become available.

Rep. Briggs King stated that she was a part of an alternative teaching pathway and as a recruiter. She had difficulty recruiting teachers as they could not pass a certain content area of the Praxis test. Rep. Briggs King explained that it is a shame that highly qualified specialist teachers are not able to teach because they cannot pass the all-encompassing Praxis test. Delaware is losing student educators due to the difficulty of the Praxis II.

Rep. Shupe asked what happens after a teacher is accepted. He clarified that he was looking for subsequent testing to make sure the teacher has grown in the needed areas.

Ms. Rouser responded that there is not a mapped-out process. She stated that the working group has considered the ability of a person who misses the cutoff score by a few points and are confident that the requirements listed on lines 23 and 24 give the teacher enough education to enter the profession.

Rep. Moore responded that teachers are consistently tested on component measures of content knowledge in the classroom.

Chair Williams opened the committee floor to public comment.

Kristin Dwyer, Director of Legislation and Political Organizing for the Delaware State Education Association (DSEA) expressed support for the bill. DSEA worked with the working group to

come up with the regulation that will go into effect after this bill expires. Educators have relayed to DSEA their excitement for this bill as it will help them.

Dr. Tammy Croce, DASA, stated support for the bill.

Robert Overmiller opposed the bill as it would reduce the expertise of educators.

A motion was made by Rep. Briggs King and seconded by Rep. Chukwuocha to release HB 441 from committee; the motion carried. Yes= 16 (Bolden, Briggs King, Bush, Chukwuocha, Collins, Hensley, Kowalko, Lynn, Matthews, Moore, Morrison, Osienski, Postles, Ramone, Shupe, and Williams) No=0; Absent= 2 (Heffernan and Smith). The bill was released from committee with a F=6, M=8, U=0 vote

Chair Williams introduced **HB 403, AN ACT TO AMEND TITLE 14 OF THE DELAWARE CODE RELATING TO THE DELAWARE INSTITUTE OF VETERINARY MEDICAL EDUCATION.** With permission from the Chair, Rep. Bolden, prime sponsor of the bill, introduced HB 403.

Rep. Bolden stated that this bill came out of hearing of the Joint Finance Committee (JFC) when veterinarian personnel described the lack of information on recipients of the Delaware Institute of Veterinary Medicine scholarship. This Act requires recipients of this financial assistance upon graduation to practice veterinary medicine in Delaware for a minimum of two years.

Chair Williams stated that the scholarship program is for students who live in Delaware who wish to attend school at the University of Georgia and Oklahoma State. The program has existed since 1975 with requirements of being a citizen of Delaware for twelve months. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) was unable to answer questions about the status of the scholarship recipients or their backgrounds. Chair Williams expressed her support for the bill.

Rep. Briggs King explained that Delaware has three programs that provide scholarships for medical, dental and veterinarian programs. These programs allow talented students the opportunity to gain degrees not available in the State. Veterinarian programs are very competitive with limited seats. Rep. Briggs King stated that this program allows five Delaware students to have a seat in a reputable veterinarian program. In addition, Veterinarian medicine degrees can be in very specific industries that are not available in Delaware. Rep. Briggs King hopes to change some of the standards of the program but to not alter it too much.

Chair Williams reiterated the need for veterinarians in Delaware. She added that the state should have information on the people receiving money from the State.

Rep. Briggs King responded that no colleges in Delaware offer the veterinarian programs accessible by the scholarship. She stated her understanding that the purpose of the scholarship is to provide Delaware students the ability to get into competitive programs in order to be a vet.

Chair Williams agreed with some of Rep. Briggs King sentiment but repeated that there is no information on the scholarship.

Rep. Morrison voiced concern for the lack of specialty veterinarian industries in Delaware. He asked what would happen when a student is forced to come back to Delaware, but their specialty areas is not provided, or they cannot find work.

Rep. Bolden responded that she did not look into course descriptions or specialties. The main concern of the bill is to gain information on the recipients of State funds and to figure out if Delaware is making a good investment.

Rep. Morrison expressed concern about the State mandating students to come back to Delaware without the proper capabilities to take in these veterinarians. He asked what the repercussions would be for an individual that does not return.

Rep. Bolden stated that the bill only requires recipients to come back to the State.

Rep. Morrison stated that the bill lacks repercussion which could cause equality problems. He suggested tabling the bill.

Rep. Bolden responded that not all legislation has to have repercussions. She is open for suggestions on how to fix the bill and reiterated the need to find information on Delaware's investment into scholarship recipients.

Vice Chair Matthews agreed that the two-year residency requirement and specialty problems were issues of the bill. He suggested a volunteer-based program that is based off hours served to promote flexibility.

Rep. Bolden admired the suggestion.

Chair Williams believes the goal of obtaining financial information was achieved by the committee regardless of if the bill is released.

Vice Chair Chukwuocha voiced concern for veterinarian graduates prior commitments and how they would be notified of this change. He agreed with Vice Chair Matthews suggestion and on the need for more information to be provided on those receiving State funds.

Chair Williams clarified that the bill would only apply to future applicants.

Rep. Shupe suggested that all of the medical, dental and veterinarian programs be brought before the committee to discuss their role in serving the community. He stated that veterinarians should return to Delaware and that volunteer hours are not an equivalent replacement for entering the workforce.

Rep. Hensley stated that JFC has experience contention with this program for the past four years as information has been requested with little results. The program faces challenges with gathering information from other universities, but they have been asked to overcome this hurdle.

Rep. Collins stated that he graduated from the University of Delaware with a music degree in education with no availabilities in the State. He commended the concept of the bill but agreed that there are practical complications with the bill.

Chair Williams asked for a representative of the DDOE to explain how applicants are chosen.

Juliet Murawski, Financial Aid and Scholarship Administrator for DDOE, responded that the partnered schools choose applicants, and the Higher Education Office simply verifies the residency of the applicant in the State.

Rep. Morrison asked if medical scholarship recipients are required to come back to Delaware and if there are reinforcements in place.

Ms. Murawski responded that she cannot speak on the Delaware Institute of Medical Education and Research (DIMER) program. She could speak on certain Professional Incentive programs where the student signs a promissory note, if they do not practice in Delaware their tuition coverage transforms into a loan. Ms. Murawski added that this is not a popular option since students do not want to get into debt.

Rep. Shupe responded that the DIMER program does not require students to practice in Delaware, but the loan repayment fund does.

Rep. Briggs King stated that medical students have federal aid contracts to serve underserved areas and it would be unfair to layer a state contract to these students.

Chair Williams opened the committee floor to public comment.

Dr. Robert Thompson, representing the Delaware Veterinarian Medical Association and the Delaware Institute of Veterinary Medical Education, voiced concern on the legislation. Dr. Thompson stated that there are deficiencies in the bill that do not account for the lack of industry in Delaware.

Chair Williams asked Dr. Thompson his opinion on if the bill was changed to require the applicant to return to Delaware.

Dr. Thompson stated that the scholarship is in contract with Southern Regional Education Board (SREB). SREB allows The University of Georgia and Oklahoma State to select students. He was not sure how the State could regulate students to come back to Delaware.

Robert Overmiller opposed the bill since other scholarship programs do not require heightened information gathering.

Rep. Briggs King stated that the program provides funds directly to the partnered universities and not to the applicants.

A motion was made by Rep. Bush and seconded by Rep. Chukwuocha to release HB 403 from committee; the motion failed. Yes= 7 (Bolden, Bush, Chukwuocha, Matthews, Moore, Osienski, and Williams) No= 9 (Briggs King, Collins, Hensley, Lynn, Morrison, Postles, Ramone, Shupe, and Kowalko); Absent= 2 (Heffernan and Smith).

A motion was made by Rep. Bolden and seconded by Rep. Briggs King to table HB 403 from committee; the motion carried.

Rep. Bolden stated her intent to gather information on the scholarship program out of session.

Rep. Kowalko explained that he voted no because it felt disingenuous to the student to sign a contract bond to Delaware where the industry may not be prepared.

Chair Williams introduced **HB 388, AN ACT TO AMEND TITLE 14 OF THE DELAWARE CODE RELATING TO THE DELAWARE SCHOOL SAFETY AND SECURITY FUND.**

With permission from the Chair, Rep. Hensley, prime sponsor of the bill, introduced HB 388.

Rep. Hensley stated that three years ago the General Assembly created the Delaware School Safety and Security Fund (“fund”). The fund provided capital for a variety of items a school could use for safety measures to best serve their needs. Currently, a majority of the funds have been used by the school districts but violence in schools continues to be at an all-time high. Rep. Hensley explained that the bill allows schools to hire school safety and security personnel at their discretion. An amendment was filed with the bill that removes the \$5 million cap for the fund. Rep. Hensley stated that HA 1 contains changes brought forward by critical stakeholders.

Chair Williams stated that there is approximately \$400,000 left in the fund according to the Controller General. She expressed support for the bill and asked if schools can use the money for School Resource Officers (SRO).

Rep. Matthews voiced support for the bill. He stated that constables are often retired police officers and are of value to schools. He recommended that all schools have a constable and create a pipeline for retired police officers to become constables.

Rep. Kowalko asked about the use of constables.

Rep. Hensley responded that HA 1 will change the use of constables to school safety and security personnel to allow for more flexibility in hiring practices.

Rep. Kowalko asked for the definition of a constable. He voiced concern for retired police and military personnel in schools without proper verification.

Rep. Hensley asked Bryan Moore, Program Manager for School Climate at the DDOE, to answer Rep. Kowalko.

Mr. Moore responded that a constable has to be certified through the Board of Constables with a training program. He added that many school districts require constables to be in the youth aid division or a SRO.

Rep. Kowalko emphasized the need for proper certification of school officers since the solution to violence is not to place arms in schools.

Rep. Morrison stated his understanding that constables are already in schools and this bill does not change this.

Mr. Moore agreed.

Rep. Shupe expressed support for the bill and recommended an amendment that gives the fund a minimum of \$5 million annually.

Rep. Hensley agreed to work with Rep. Shupe.

Rep. Kowalko asked if a budget line that carries over to another General Assembly is allowed.

Rep. Hensley responded that he would look into this issue.

Rep. Briggs King stated that this bill was filed in April 2022, before several national school travesties occurred. She agreed that HA 1 should reflect a priority in capital that is given to the fund. Rep. Briggs King explained that constables and SROs not only prevent incidences but develop a relationship with students that enhances the community.

Rep. Moore expressed support for the bill and for putting the safety of teachers and students at the forefront. Rep. Moore explained that as a teacher she feels frightened to attend school because of the possibility of violence and horrific events. She emphasized that teachers are being abused in Delaware schools and the State needs to support them.

Chair Williams opened the committee floor to public comment.

Dr. John Marinucci, DSBA, expressed support for the bill. Dr. Marinucci thanked the sponsor of the bill for flexibility and understanding in the creation of amendments to the bill.

Javonne Rich, Policy and Advocacy Director for the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Delaware, opposed the bill. Ms. Rich stated that constables do not face a rigorous screening process and the presence of police forces in schools takes away from the learning environment. According to Delaware civil rights data, Delaware students attending schools with police were eight times more likely to get arrested versus their counterparts in schools without police. Moreover, students of color and with disabilities are arrested three times more than their non-disabled, white counterparts.

Kristin Dwyer, DSEA, strongly supported the bill. She stated that educators need protection throughout the school year for various safety needs.

Sherry Long supported the bill. She thanked the sponsor of the bill for protecting students in schools as a mother to a teacher.

Robert Overmiller expressed support for the bill.

Dr. Tammy Croce, DASA, stated support for the bill.

Kevin Carson, Superintendent of the Sussex County Vocational School District, voiced strong support for the legislation.

A motion was made by Rep. Briggs King and seconded by Rep. Chukwuocha to release HB 388 from committee; the motion carried. Yes= 16 (Bolden, Briggs King, Bush, Chukwuocha, Collins, Hensley, Kowalko, Lynn, Matthews, Moore, Morrison, Osienski, Postles, Ramone, Shupe, and Williams) No=0; Absent= 2 (Heffernan and Smith). The bill was released from committee with a F=8, M=6, U=0 vote

Chair Williams introduced **HB 436, AN ACT TO AMEND TITLE 14 OF THE DELAWARE CODE RELATING TO THE REDDING CONSORTIUM FOR EDUCATIONAL EQUITY**. With permission from the Chair, Vice Chair Chukwuocha, prime sponsor of the bill, introduced HB 436.

Vice Chair Chukwuocha stated that Covid-19 has derailed the progress of the Redding Consortium. The Redding Consortium has made great progress towards seeking equality and recommendations for school districts. This bill extends the dates in which the recommendation and plan of the Redding Consortium for Educational Equity must be reviewed and acted upon by the State Board of Education by June 1, 2023, and no later than September 1, 2023.

Rep. Kowalko expressed support for the bill. He added that the efforts of the Redding Consortium have been great but faced hurdles from the unforeseen pandemic. He stated hope that members of the Consortium keep vigilant on this issue.

Rep. Moore asked when the Redding Consortium was created.

Vice Chair Chukwuocha responded that it passed in 2019.

Rep. Moore asked how long the expected results of the Consortium will take.

Vice Chair Chukwuocha stated that the Consortium is in partnership with DSU and continues to work on recommendations. He noted that the new deadline was made to coincide with the Wilmington Collaborative. Vice Chair Chukwuocha stated that the Consortium feels comfortable with the deadline of June 1, 2023.

Rep. Moore explained that she did not want data to be unavailable to future projects and collaboratives.

Vice Chair Chukwuocha responded that other programs and collaboratives have expressed desire to work with the Redding Consortium and its recommendations.

Rep. Moore cautioned against uncomplete research as students may pay the price.

Vice Chair Chukwuocha emphasized the Consortiums desire and drive to improve the education landscape for the City of Wilmington and the State.

Chair Williams opened the committee floor to public comment.

Robert Overmiller supported the bill.

A motion was made by Rep. Briggs King and seconded by Rep. Williams to release HB 436 from committee; the motion carried. Yes= 13 (Bolden, Briggs King, Chukwuocha, Collins, Kowalko, Lynn, Matthews, Moore, Morrison, Osienski, Postles, Ramone, and Williams) No=0; Absent= 5 (Bush, Heffernan, Hensley, Shupe, and Smith). The bill was released from committee with a F=4, M=8, U=0 vote

Chair Williams introduced **HB 454, AN ACT TO AMEND TITLE 14 OF THE DELAWARE CODE RELATING TO ELIGIBILITY FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION AND RELATED SERVICES.** With permission from the Chair, Vice Chair Matthews introduced the bill.

Vice Chair Matthews stated that current statute and regulation extend eligibility to the end of the school year in which a child with a disability turns 21. This bill proposes to keep the established exit point to minimize service interruptions and only change the age from the end of the school year in which a child turns 21 to the end of the school year in which a child turns 22. He voiced support for the bill.

Chair Williams opened the committee floor to public comment.

Robert Overmiller supported the bill.

Rep. Matthews urged members of the committee to support the bill and allow it to move quickly through the House.

A motion was made by Rep. Ramone and seconded by Rep. Williams to release HB 454 from committee; the motion carried. Yes= 13 (Bolden, Briggs King, Chukwuocha, Collins, Kowalko, Lynn, Matthews, Moore, Morrison, Osienski, Postles, Ramone, and Williams) No=0; Absent= 5 (Bush, Heffernan, Hensley, Shupe and Smith). The bill was released from committee with a F=4, M=8, U=0 vote

Chair Williams adjourned the meeting at 5:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

Valeria Coverdale, Legislative Fellow

Speaker List:

Bryan Moore, DDOE

Dominic Banks, Appoquinimink School District

Javonne Rich, ACLU of Delaware

Dr. Jennifer Alexander, Colonial School District,

Dr. John Marinucci, DSBA

Juliet Murawski, DDOE

Kevin Carson, Sussex County Vocational School District

Kristin Dwyer, DSEA

Linnea Bradshaw, Delaware Professional Standards Board

Robert Overmiller

Dr. Robert Thompson, Delaware Veterinarian Medical Association

Shelley Rouser, Delaware State University

Sherry Long

Dr. Tammy Croce, DASA