

Senate Education Committee

152nd General Assembly

Wednesday, June 18, 2025

Senate Hearing Room/Virtual Meeting

2:12 PM – 3:23 PM

Committee Members Present:

Senator Laura V. Sturgeon

Laura.Sturgeon@delaware.gov

Senator S. Elizabeth Lockman

Elizabeth.Lockman@delaware.gov

Senator David P. Sokola

David.Sokola@delaware.gov

Senator Stephanie Hansen

Stephanie.Hansen@delaware.gov

Senator Nicole Poore

Nicole.Poore@delaware.gov

Senator Eric Buckson

Eric.Buckson@delaware.gov

Senator Dave Lawson

Dave.Lawson@delaware.gov

Committee Members Absent:

Other Legislators Present:

Senator Kyra Hoffner

Kyra.Hoffner@delaware.gov

Senator Bryan Townsend

Bryan.Townsend@delaware.gov

Rep. Jeff. Hilovsky

jeff.hilovsky@delaware.gov

Staff:

Nicole Alvarez, Senate

Ellen Cappard, Senate

All public registrants, both in person and virtual, are listed in the Appendix

Agenda

Approval of Meeting Minutes from 6/11/25

HS 1 for HB 15

HB 121

HB 71

SB 187

HS 1 for HB 203

Introduction

Senator Sturgeon commenced the meeting, reviewed the hybrid meeting protocol, and explained the meeting structure. She proceeded to conduct roll call and verified a quorum was reached.

I. Approval of Meeting Minutes

Senator Sturgeon asked if there were any edits to the meeting minutes from 6/11/25.

Senator Sokola made a motion to approve the minutes.

Senator Poore seconded the motion.

The previous meeting minutes were approved.

II. House Substitute 1 for House Bill 15 (S. Moore) AN ACT TO AMEND TITLE 14 OF THE DELAWARE CODE RELATING TO PLAY-BASED LEARNING IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION.

Synopsis: Like House Bill No. 15, this Act permits early childhood educators in the public schools to use and encourage play-based learning in their classrooms and in their curriculum. This Act permits local education agencies to provide early childhood professional development in play-based learning, which may include professional development programs developed by the Department of Education. This Act also permits the Department to promulgate regulations for purposes of implementing this Act. This House Substitute No. 1 for House Bill No. 15 incorporates the changes from House Amendment 1 to House Bill No. 15 with respect to the definitions of early childhood education and early childhood educators encompassing education from prekindergarten through second grade, adding topics that may be included in materials developed to provide ongoing early childhood professional development in play-based learning, and making technical corrections for clarity. This House Substitute also updates the definition of “play” and “play-based learning” contained in House Bill No. 15 and adds a definition for “guided play”.

Senator Sturgeon deferred to Sen. Townsend to present.

Senator Townsend presented on the bill.

Senator Sturgeon opened the floor to committee members and asked to be added to the bill.

Senator Poore said how she loves the bill and asked to be added.

Senator Buckson said that he supports the bill and made a comment about educators and this bill is a good step forward.

Senator Lockman said that she loves the legislation and asked to be added to the bill.

Senator Sokola asked to be added to the bill.

Senator Hansen asked to be added to the bill.

Senator Sturgeon mentioned that DOE Secretary Cindy Marten was in attendance and then she opened the floor to public comment.

Nicole Alvarez explained the public comment process.

Mary Pieri gave comments on the bill.

Nicole Freedman from the YMCA of Delaware spoke in support of the bill.

Taylor Hawk from DSEA spoke in support of the bill.

Nicole Alvarez moved to virtual comment.

Ellen Cappard explained virtual public comment.

Kristin Mills gave comments on the bill.

Ellen Cappard concluded public comment.

Senator Sturgeon moved to the next item on the agenda.

HS 1 for HB 15 was reported out of committee: Favorable, 2; On its Merits, 2

III. House Bill 121 (Chukwuocha) AN ACT TO AMEND TITLE 14 OF THE DELAWARE CODE RELATING TO CHILD CARE LICENSING.

Synopsis: This Act exempts from state child care licensing requirements a military family child care provider that serves only children eligible for Department of Defense subsidized care that is either located on a military base or federal property, certified as a family child care provider by a branch of the U.S. Department of Defense or the U.S. Coast Guard, or both.

Senator Sturgeon deferred to Senator Poore to present.

Senator Buckson asked how this bill would be implemented.

Senator Poore presented on the bill

Senator Sturgeon opened the floor to committee members.

Senator Lockman asked about certifications by the Department of Defense, line 10.

Senator Poore clarified and said that they have not had any complaints come through.

Senator Buckson joked that he didn't like the bill because there are no bases in his district but that he is signing on to the bill.

Senator Sturgeon opened the floor for public comment.

Nicole Alvarez explained the public comment process. Seeing no in person comment, she moved to virtual comment.

Ellen Cappard then began virtual public comment. There was no virtual public comment.

Senator Sturgeon moved to the next item on the agenda.

HB 121 was reported out of committee: On Its Merits, 4.

IV. House Bill 71 (Harris) AN ACT TO AMEND TITLE 14 RELATING TO INTERSCHOLASTIC ATHLETICS.

Synopsis: This Act requires the Delaware Interscholastic Athletic Association to promulgate regulations requiring all coaches to have CPR, first aid, and automated external defibrillator (AED) training. It also requires schools with an athletic program or department to have an Emergency Action Plan for responding to a cardiac arrest event at an athletic event or practice. It requires that an AED be accessible in a clearly marked, unlocked location at any athletic event or venue. Finally, the regulations must require testing and maintenance of AEDs and notification to the Office of Emergency Medical Services regarding the AED acquisition and its location.

Senator Sturgeon deferred to Sen. Poore

Senator Poore presented on the bill.

Senator Sturgeon opened the floor to question from committee members.

Senator Buckson stated he was happy with this bill and happy to support it.

Senator Hansen asked to be added to the bill.

Senator Buckson asked to be added to the bill.

Senator Sturgeon asked Sen. Poore if her witness would like to speak before public comment.

Greer Firestone shared a personal story that relates to the bill.

Senator Sturgeon opened the floor to public comment.

Nicole Alvarez explained the public comment process.

Stewart Krug shared a personal story and support for the bill.

Tracy Woodson gave remarks on the bill.

Nick Wolfe gave remarks on the bill.

Richard Wagner shared a personal story and gave remarks on the bill.

Nicole Alvarez moved to virtual comment.

Ellen Cappard began virtual comment.

Whitney Parrish Perry from the American Heart Associate spoke in support of the bill.

Senator Sturgeon moved to the next item on the agenda.

HB 71 was reported out of committee: On Its Merits, 4

V. Senate Bill 187 (Sturgeon) AN ACT TO AMEND TITLE 14 OF THE DELAWARE CODE RELATING TO EDUCATOR AND SCHOOL-BASED MENTAL HEALTH PRACTITIONERS SUPPORT PROGRAMS.

Synopsis: The Department of Education (“Department”) currently administers the High Needs Educator Student Loan Repayment Program, the Speech-Language Pathologist Student Loan Repayment Program, and the Mental Health Services Student Loan Repayment Program. Annually, these programs help roughly 600 public school employees, including educators, speech-language pathologists, school counselors, school psychologists, and school social workers, through a single application process, by making loan payments directly to student loan lenders. But paying the lenders directly has caused 2 persistent issues: 1. Because the payments are considered taxable income, award recipients have the tax withheld from their paychecks, even though the payments go directly to the lenders. This lowers the award recipients’ take-home pay and can create confusion and hardship. 2. The process involves sending out 600 or more individual checks each year. And many checks are returned or delayed due to changes in lender information or system mismatches. To avoid these issues, the Department recommends combining the 3 different student loan repayment programs into a single program and changing the award process from a system that repays lenders directly to a system that pays stipends to public school employees through the State central payroll operation. These changes would streamline a system that already uses a single application and would do all of the following: 1. Avoid surprise tax impacts and imputed income issues. 2. Reduce administrative burden and failed payments. 3. Provide more timely and transparent support to award recipients. The suggested changes are easy to implement, budget-neutral, and could allow public school employees who previously declined awards due to the tax consequences to benefit from the financial support. This Act makes the changes recommended by the Department by doing all of the following: 1. Eliminates the separate Speech-Language Pathologist Student Loan Repayment Program, Mental Health Services Student Loan Repayment Program, and High Needs Educator Student Loan Repayment Program, and combines them into a single program under § 4163 of Title 14. 2. Shifts payment of awards from paying the lenders directly to paying the award recipients a stipend through the State central payroll operation. 3. Streamlines the process for determining financial need by allowing the Department to focus on collecting the income and loan information that is necessary to fairly allocate program funds. 4. Changes the title of § 4163 of Title 14 from the High Needs Educator Student Loan Repayment Program to the “Public School Employee Support Program for High Need Areas” because the 3 programs are now combined into a single program and the program is no longer a direct student loan repayment program. This Act also makes technical corrections to conform existing law to the standards of the Delaware Legislative Drafting Manual.

Senator Sturgeon presented on the bill and opened the floor to questions from committee members.

Senator Buckson asked if anyone has expressed concern with the bill.

Senator Sturgeon said not to her but maybe in public comment.

Senator Lockman asked to be added to the bill.

Senator Sturgeon invited Sec. Marten to provide remarks.

Secretary Marten provided comments on the bill.

Senator Sturgeon opened the floor to public comment.

Nicole Alvarez. saw no in person comment and moved to virtual public comment.

Ellen Cappard had no virtual public comment.

Senator Sturgeon moved to the next bill on the agenda.

SB 187 was reported out of committee: On Its Merits, 4

VI. House Substitute 1 for House Bill 203 (Hilovsky) AN ACT TO AMEND TITLE 14 OF THE DELAWARE CODE RELATING TO THE EQUITY AND INCLUSION IN FINANCIAL LITERACY FOR ALL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN DELAWARE ACT.

Synopsis: With 60% of U.S. households living paycheck to paycheck, 40% of Americans having less than \$300 in savings, 33% of Americans having saved nothing for retirement, 95% of Americans having not saved enough for retirement, and 87% of American teens admitting not understanding their finances, financial literacy education in Delaware high schools is needed. This Act, which may be cited as “The Equity and Inclusion in Financial Literacy for All High School Students in Delaware Act”, requires high schools to provide, at a minimum, a 1/2 credit on financial literacy. And, beginning with students entering grade 9 in the 2026 through 2027 school year, successful completion of the credit will be required to obtain a high school diploma. This Act requires the credit to include instruction which meets the financial literacy standards for high school students adopted by the Department of Education. This substitute corrects a reference from "course" to "credit" in the synopsis.

Senator Sturgeon deferred to Sen. Hoffner to present.

Senator Hoffner presented on the bill.

Senator Sturgeon noted that the bill’s sponsor, Rep. Jeff Hilovsky was present and made comments on the bill.

Senator Buckson asked to direct questions to Rep. Hilovsky and asked about the implementation of the bill.

Rep. Hilovsky answered and spoke more on the bill.

Senator Buckson made a comment about the math requirement.

Rep. Hilovsky responded.

Senator Poore asked about the financial literacy course being half a credit.

Rep. Hilovsky responded.

Senator Poore asked if there was anyone in the room to answer about schools determining what courses can be credited.

Dr. Dorrell Green responded to Sen. Poore.

Sen. Sturgeon asked for DOE to come forward.

Sen. Poore asked her question again about credits.

A representative from the Dept of Education answered in depth.

Senator Lockman expressed concerns with the bill.

Senator Sturgeon opened the floor to public comment.

Nicole Alvarez began public comment.

Dr. Dorrell Green made comments on the bill.

Britney Mumford spoke in support of the bill but mentioned concerns with it.

Kendall Massett made comments on the bill.

Margie Lopez-Waite made comments on the bill.

Courtney Fox made comments on the bill.

Mark Olazagasti made comments on the bill.

Scott Abbott made comments on the bill.

Ellen Cappard began virtual comment.

Donna Geist made comments on the bill.

Kylie Holliday made comments on the bill.

Nethra Naresh made comments on the bill.

Mary Schorse made comments on the bill.

Rachel Valentine made comments on the bill.

HS 1 for HB 203 was not reported out of committee.

Senator Sturgeon reminded committee members to consider signing the bills being circulated and asked for a motion to adjourn.

Senator Hansen made a motion to adjourn.

Senator Lockman seconded the motion.

Senator Sturgeon adjourned the meeting at 3.23 PM.

Minutes prepared by Nicole Alvarez, Senate Staff, 6/24/25

Appendix A: Members of the public pre-registered for webinar and In-person sign-in sheet Attendees

Greer Firestone
Dr.Dorrell Green, CSOA
Mary Pieri, DSEA
Britney Mumford, DECAN
Kendall Massett, DCSN
Margie Lopez-Waite, ASPIRA
Courtney Fox
Stewart Krug, MKF
Mark Olazagasti
Tracy Woodson, HITG
Nick Wolfe, HITG
Secretary Cindy Marten, DDOE
Richard Wagner
Scott Abbott
Nicole Freedman, YMCA
Taylor Hawk, DSEA
Kristin Mills
Whitney Parrish Perry
Donna Geist
Kylie Holliday
Nethra Naresh
Mary Schorse
Rachel Valentine

Appendix B: Written public comments submitted.

Erin Bailey, American College of Cardiology



DELAWARE
CHAPTER

AMERICAN COLLEGE of CARDIOLOGY®

June 18, 2025

Dear Chair Sturgeon and Members of the Senate Education Committee,

The Delaware Chapter of the American College of Cardiology is writing today to express our strong support for House Bill 71, sponsored by Representative Harris. House Bill 71 will require schools with an athletic program to develop emergency action plans (EAP) to respond to incidents of sudden cardiac arrest while participating in a school athletic practice or event. House Bill 71 is critical to prevent sudden cardiac arrest in our high school athletes.

Cardiac arrest can happen anywhere, at any time. Over 23,000 children under the age of 18 experience cardiac arrest outside of a hospital each year in the United States. Almost 40% of these events are sports-related, highlighting the need for a comprehensive plan with a trained team in place to react to a sudden cardiac arrest. Additionally, House Bill 71 will require AEDs at all athletic venues. There have been too many cases across our state where individuals fall victim to sudden cardiac arrest due to delayed intervention, resulting in profound incapacity or death. Many of these lives could have been saved by immediate action and the use of an AED. House Bill 71 ensures the AED is ready for use in an emergency, securing the safety of students, school staff, and visitors.

Lastly, House Bill 71 aligns with the recently passed federal legislation. The Hearts Act, a bipartisan bill, was signed into law in December and authorizes a federal grant program to help schools purchase AEDs and obtain CPR training for coaches. While we wait for Congress to make the appropriation to the program, Delaware has the chance to jumpstart its schools' access to AEDs and lifesaving measures. The Smart Heart Sport Coalition is also dedicated to ensuring that schools have access to AEDs with the launch of the "AEDs for Youth" program, offering AEDs to schools and youth sports organizations at substantial discounts. These discounts on AED bundles range from 20% to 60%, depending on the brand, model, and quantity. Both options will help alleviate the financial aspect of this legislation.

By ensuring our high schools have trained responders and access to lifesaving interventions, House Bill 71 will help save lives. **We urge you to pass House Bill 71.**

Vinay R. Hosmane, MD, MPH, FACC
Governor, Delaware Chapter of the American College of Cardiology

Kevin Copeland, DO, FACC
Governor-Elect, Delaware Chapter of the American College of Cardiology



June 18, 2025

The Honorable Laura V. Sturgeon, Chair
Senate Education Committee
Delaware General Assembly
411 Legislative Avenue
Dover, DE 19901

SUBJECT: Support for HB 71 with HA 1 – Updates to Grace Firestone Act

Dear Chair Sturgeon and Members of the Committee:

The American Heart Association thanks the committee for the opportunity to speak and submit testimony in strong support of House Bill (HB) 71, “An Act To Amend Title 14 Relating To Interscholastic Athletics,” amended with House Amendment (HA) 1. We extend our gratitude to Representative Harris for her leadership on this issue and respectfully request that the committee support this bill and the accompanying amendment.

BACKGROUND

More than 356,000 people experience cardiac arrest outside of a hospital in the United States each year. Without the proper response from people nearby, 90% of these incidents of cardiac arrest will result in death. It is estimated that about 23,000 children under the age of 18 experience cardiac arrest outside of a hospital annually and that about 40% of these incidents are sports-related.

Cardiac arrest is the leading cause of death for student athletes. It doesn’t have to be, though. Appropriate emergency response tools, like Cardiac Emergency Response Plans (CERPs) or athletic Emergency Action Plans (EAPs), laypeople trained in Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR), and ready access to Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) can raise survival rates by 50% or more. In schools with AEDs, approximately 70% of children survive cardiac arrest—7 times the overall survival rate for children.

DELAWARE CONTEXT

The safety of Delaware students—as well as school staff and visitors/spectators—can be enhanced with a coordinated, practiced response plan called an athletic Emergency Action Plan. As part of the plan, athletic EAP teams are trained to administer lifesaving care until Emergency Medical Services (EMS) arrive on the scene—this may include calling 911,



administering Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR), using an Automated External Defibrillator (AED), and other emergency protocols. HB 71 facilitates this by updating the Grace Firestone Act to strengthen cardiac arrest preparedness at school athletic venues and events.

The good news is the Delaware Interscholastic Athletics Association (DIAA) has been proactive in certain areas, including CPR, AED, and first aid training for coaches and developing athletic Emergency Action Plans. This bill would simply codify the expectation and requirement of these activities into law, and address gaps related to AED access and placement.

Specifically, HB 71 calls upon the DIAA to adopt the following regulations:

- Require coaches to be certified in CPR, AED use, and first aid.
- Require that each school with an athletic department or program develop an athletic Emergency Action Plan (EAP) to respond to incidents of cardiac arrest or a similar life-threatening emergency during a school-sponsored athletic practice or event.
- Require that an AED be clearly marked and *easily accessible* in an unlocked location at each school athletic venue or event. This closes the gap on AED access and placement, which is not currently required through regulation.

Many states that have passed legislation like this (22 with requirements for school-sponsored athletics; 18 with requirements for school buildings—and many more moving through state legislatures right now) have done so because a student has tragically died on an athletic field or other sports venue. Today, this committee can take the opportunity to save lives by proactively strengthening the safety net for students engaged in school athletics. By passing this bill, you will close critical gaps and better position Delaware in continuing to strengthen cardiac emergency response in schools across the state.

HB 71 with HA 1 also signals our collective commitment to safeguarding students' lives through proven, achievable practices that empower communities to act quickly and confidently when seconds matter the most. When schools and athletics programs establish robust Emergency Action Plans and integrate lifesaving skills into everyday culture and life, students, coaches, educators, and others grow more resilient and prepared, and they gain the confidence needed to recognize and respond to cardiac arrest



and other life-threatening emergencies—whether they're in school, on the basketball court, or at the grocery store.

Together, we are increasing the odds of survival and empowering Delaware students and communities to become healthier, safer, and more responsive. We respectfully urge the committee to support HB 71 with HA 1.

Thank you for your time, attention, and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions you may have; please do not hesitate to reach out to the contact information below.

Respectfully,

Whitney A Parrish Perry, Government Relations Director
American Heart Association
whitney.parrishperry@heart.org

Thank you for providing an opportunity to provide comment at today's committee meeting.

Here are my comments in full from today:

Good afternoon. My name is Donna Johnson Geist, and I have been advocating for financial literacy for over a decade. In 2015, I was honored to be able to staff and lead the task force created by HJR4 that led to the creation of the state's Financial Literacy Standards which were then adopted by the State Board of Education in 2018. I am excited that Delaware is continuing to pursue opportunities to increase access for students to become more financially literate.

I support the foundational premise of this bill; however, I believe there are some considerations that should be considered and potentially result in language revisions to the bill as it is currently written.

In Delaware, currently there are state level graduation requirements with the ability for local districts and charters to go above and beyond the state-level minimums. These provide flexibility for local control in how to best support students in meeting and exceeding these requirements. As currently written, this bill limits the ability of schools by requiring that they only classify the financial literacy course as a social studies course. One of the more successful education initiatives in the past decade has been the development and expansion in Delaware of Career Pathways. 3 credits in a designated career pathway is currently required for graduation and there is a wide variety of ways students fulfill this component. One such way, which is offered at DOver High School, in the Capital School District (where I was recently elected to serve on the Board) and in 10 other HSs across the state, is the NAF Academy of Finance. This is a 3-course pathway that would fulfill the intent of these requirements; however, as currently written, students in the Academy of Finance would not be able to use any of these credits to meet the new Financial Literacy credit because these courses are not courses fulfilling the social studies requirement. I hope that you can see why such imitations for how to implement this new requirement would limit and potentially be at odds with the very intent of the bill. In many locations, Personal Finance or Financial Literacy is taught by the Business department. Even at DSU's Financial Literacy Institute, the program is located in the Business School, not the Social Studies Department.

In many other states, 1 to date, they have also wrestled with how to implement financial literacy or personal finance requirements without further impacting the growing list of graduation requirements., All too often, when a new item is suggested to be added, the most common question is, "What are you removing to balance the addition of this new item?" States such as Indiana and California recently struggled with this as well. They decided to make it more flexible for local schools and districts to determine how this 1/2 credit requirement could take the place of other existing credit requirements, by allowing the 1/2 credit to be an elective, or take the place of another content area, if the course met the standards required by the state. This approach allows for more flexibility as well as opportunities for creativity and innovation, utilizing outside partners or other valuable resources to meet this requirement.

In one further suggestion, I would recommend that the state consider developing a microcredential that would serve as a training program for certified educators seeking to teach this course - that provides for the greatest flexibility in staffing this program and opens the program up to staff who are interested and passionate about the subject, while also eliminating unnecessary burden and cost of an additional certification or Praxis test, which may not actually exist or align with the state's standards for Financial Literacy

Thank you very much for your time today!

Best,

Donna Geist

TRINIDAD NAVARRO
COMMISSIONER



STATE OF DELAWARE
DEPARTMENT OF INSURANCE

June 11, 2025

To: Members of the House Education Committee
RE: House Bill 203

Dear Chair Williams and Representatives,

On behalf of the Delaware Department of Insurance and the Insurance Consumers of Delaware, thank you for the opportunity to comment on House Bill 203. We **support** this legislation to ensure Delaware's future leaders have access to the financial education that prepares them to succeed in life.

As we reviewed this legislation, I thought about how my financial literacy has changed throughout life and through the generations of my family. I thought about my father, growing up with a dirt floor, his family hunting to eat. I thought about how my parents worked hard to put food on the table each night, and how each day at school, the state provided my meal. And I thought about how, at 21 years of age, I opened an account at the New Castle County Credit Union. My field training officer, Corporal Clarke, took me under his wing one day when he was going to deposit a check on a break. He encouraged me to open a credit union account and enroll in the police supplemental retirement program. It felt like a huge investment for me at the time, but he explained how the matching funds provided by that program could help build a bright future for me and my family.

But not everyone has a Corporal Clarke. Many Delawareans, and not just youth, lack financial literacy and find the ability to gain that literacy to be an inaccessible privilege requiring time, expertise, and – most importantly – money. Efforts we have been proud to support, like Paid Family Medical Leave and the EARNNS state-sponsored retirement fund program, help residents contribute to their future needs. House Bill 203 will help our students prepare to access these programs, purchase insurance, and make choices about their employment and benefits that so often cause stress and confusion.

I appreciate the sponsor's intention to include experts in the curriculum, which will engage young people in meaningful conversations about real life experiences. It may even lead students to consider careers in finance and insurance at a young age. With your consideration, support, and passage of House Bill 203, I intend to participate as a presenter as permitted by this proposal.

Thank you for your time and consideration, we encourage you to support House Bill 203.

Sincerely,

Trinidad Navarro
Insurance Commissioner

Chris Haas
Senior Policy Advisor

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