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Georgia Education CAFE™ Advocacy Network

Georgia Legislature Secures Education Wins in Funding but Loses Diverse Curriculum and Discourse

2022 Georgia General Assembly Wrap-Up

We would first like to extend our deepest gratitude to our partner organizations, who worked tirelessly to advocate for more equitable and just public education in Georgia: ACLU – Georgia, Coalition of the People's Agenda, Deep Center, Fair Fight Action, Georgia Latino Alliance for Human Rights, Georgia Library & Media Association, Georgia Youth Justice Coalition, Public Education Matters, and the Southern Poverty Law Center.



Georgia Legislative Priorities

From the beginning of the session, we knew that schools would be a focal point for the assembly. In his State of the State address, Gov. Brian Kemp had identified classroom censorship and excluding trans children from school athletics in addition to fully funding the state Quality Basic Education formula as some of his key legislative priorities.

IDRA identified three key legislative priorities:

- **Provide fair and full funding for public schools;**
- **Create safe schools and culturally-sustaining educational environments; and**
- **Provide excellent education for emergent bilingual students.**

This alert outlines the status of education-related bills after the 2022 session ended Monday, April 4.

Wins from the Session

Full and Fair Funding

HB 60 & HB 999 Defeated, sponsored by Rep. Wes Cantrell. These bills would have expanded Georgia voucher programs to fund Educational Savings Accounts up to \$6,000 for private school tuition. The bills were stopped by the Speaker of the House after bill supporters sent mailers to representatives' home districts calling opponents "far-left radicals."

- Status: Killed by Speaker. Did not receive a floor vote in the House.
- [Read coalition letter against Georgia HB 60](#)
- [Video: See IDRA testimony against HB 999](#)

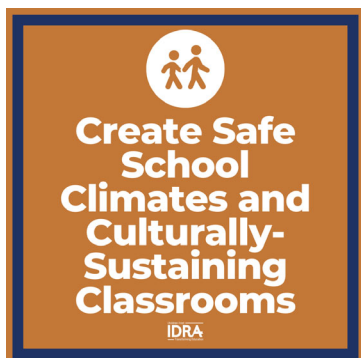


SB 601 Defeated, sponsored by Senate President Pro Tempore, Butch Miller. This bill was the Senate counterpart to the House voucher bills (HB 60 & HB 999). It would fund Educational Savings Accounts up to \$6,000. The bill was killed by several Republican representatives who were concerned that it would divert funds away from their districts that do not currently have private schools.

- Status: Failed on Crossover Day (the deadline date for bills to be passed out of their chamber).
- [Read IDRA testimony against this bill](#)

HB 10 Introduced, sponsored by Rep. Sandra Scott. This bill, called the *Support for Students Living in Poverty Act*, would have revised the state Quality Basic Education formula to include a weight that would provide additional funding to districts serving students living in poverty.

- Status: Did not receive a House committee hearing.



Safe and Sustaining Schools

SB 15 Introduced and Received Hearing, sponsored by Sen. Tonya Anderson. This bill would have created coursework that would focus on the founding principles of the United States, as well as the contributions of Black people throughout American history. While it did not pass,

this bill was given a hearing and contributed to the greater conversation of broadening and diversifying K-12 coursework in Georgia.

- Status: Did not get voted out of Senate committee.

HR 881 Passed the House, sponsored by Rep. Mack Jackson. This resolution was proposed in response to concerns that "divisive concept" (classroom censorship) bills, such as SB 377 and HB 1084, would discourage the teaching of difficult topics related to civil rights and systemic racism. This resolution was passed with bipartisan support but fell short of addressing many of the specific concerns raised by advocates.

- Status: Passed the House.

SB 435 Defeated, sponsored by Sen. Marty Harbin. This would have punished school districts for allowing transgender students to participate on a team that reflects their gender identity. The bill failed to pass out of committee after crossing over early in the session. A milder version of this language was amended and passed in HB 1084.

- Status: Died in House committee.
- [Video: See IDRA testimony against this bill](#)

HB 1217 Defeated, sponsored by Rep. Chris Erwin. This bill, titled the *Student Technology Protection Act*, put forth requirements for school districts to establish acceptable use policies for all school-provided technology devices. It further created complaint processes for parents to identify materials that they deem obscene and that may be "harmful to minors." Opponents were concerned that this bill would disproportionately target materials pertaining to LGBTQ+ themes and concepts.

- Status: Died in Senate committee.

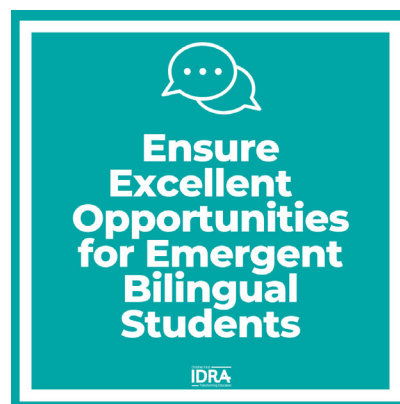
SB 377 Defeated, sponsored by Sen. Bo Hatchett. This bill establishes a list of topics pertaining to race, racial identity and systemic racism as "divisive concepts," and it prohibits their teaching in K-12 classrooms. The bill also prohibited state agencies from requiring employees to participate in training or professional development pertaining to these concepts. Opponents cautioned that this would block student learning by enabling non-expert individuals to restrict teaching and curriculum focused on diversity, equity and inclusion for all students.

- Status: Died in House committee.
- [Video: See IDRA testimony against this bill](#)

Excellent Education for Emergent Bilingual Students

HB 932 Introduced, sponsored by Rep. Wes Cantrell. This bill would have classified certain noncitizen, refugee, special immigrant, or humanitarian parole status students as in-state for college tuition purposes. It would have made college education more attainable for students.

- Status: Did not receive House committee hearing.



Bills Awaiting the Governor's Signature

The following bills were passed by the legislature and will become law unless vetoed by the governor.

School Funding

HB 517, sponsored by Rep. John Carson. This bill pertains to Georgia's voucher program. It expands the cap for Georgia's Special Needs Scholarship from \$100 million to \$120 million per year. Opponents of this bill are concerned by the increasing diversion of public funds into private accounts with minimal oversight or accountability.

Classroom Censorship

SB 226, sponsored by Sen. Jason Anavitate. This bill lays out a complaint process by which parents can review and challenge materials available in school libraries. There are processes already in existence in the Georgia code through the department of education. Opponents are concerned that this will allow individuals to restrict access to books for all students and disproportionately target materials containing to LGBTQ+ themes and concepts.

- [Video: See IDRA testimony against this bill \(January 25\)](#)
- [Video: See IDRA testimony against this bill \(February 9\)](#)

HB 1178, sponsored by Rep. Josh Bonner. This is the "Parent Bill of Rights" law that affirms certain "rights" that parents have to dictate their child's education. The bill was meant to increase transparency and access for parents but did not create any meaningful engagement structures beyond refining the curriculum review and complaint process. Opponents are concerned that this would allow individual parents to restrict teaching and curriculum focused on diversity, equity and inclusion for all students, not just their own children.

- [Read IDRA testimony against this bill](#)

HB 1084, sponsored by Rep. Will Wade. This classroom censorship bill establishes a list of topics pertaining to race, racial identity and systemic racism as "divisive concepts" and prohibits their teaching in K-12 classrooms. The bill also prohibits the Georgia Professional Standards Commission, which oversees teacher certification in the state, from requiring teachers to participate in training or professional development pertaining to these concepts. Opponents warn that this will allow individuals to restrict teaching and curriculum focused on diversity, equity and inclusion for all students. The bill was amended at 11:30 pm on *sine die* (the last day of the session) to include language that would allow for the exclusion of transgender girls from girls' sports teams in any public school.

- [Video: See IDRA testimony against this bill](#)

Georgia Coalition Against Classroom Censorship

HB 888, HB 1084, SB 375 & SB 377 Seek to Censor Classroom Conversations and Strip Funding from Georgia Students

Summary: House [Bill 888](#), [HB 1084](#), [Senate Bill 375](#), and [SB 377](#). Georgia's four classroom censorship bills, claim to promote and protect intellectual freedom. But they do the opposite by silencing educators, mandating the adoption of inaccurate concepts and points of view, prohibiting truthful classroom conversations, and punishing those schools that allow students and educators to engage critically with the impact of systemic racism and marginalization in this country. Additionally, the bills threaten much-needed school resources and allow for up to a 20% state funding penalty for schools that are believed to have violated provisions of the bill. The chart below is an analysis of HB 888, HB 1084, SB 375, and SB 377 as of January 30, 2022.

	What Could These Bills Do?			
What these bills could do to components with potential impacts	HB 888	HB 1084	SB 375	SB 377
Clarify legislative findings that deny the existence of systemic racism.	Specific language from the bill: §888.1.B(1): The General Assembly finds: Slavery, racial discrimination under the law and racism in general are so inconsistent with the founding principles of the United States that Americans fought a civil war to eliminate the first, waged long-standing political campaigns to eradicate the second, and rendered the third unacceptable in the court of public opinion, all of which dispels the idea that the United States and its institutions are systematically racist and confirms the notion that slavery, racial discrimination under the law, and racism should be at the center of public elementary, secondary, and postsecondary educational institutions.	Does not contain this provision	Does not contain this provision	Does not contain this provision
Potential impact: Makes future efforts to eliminate systemic racism more difficult by elevating an incorrect, incomplete, and harmful narrative that may be used as the foundation for future efforts to ignore and/or dismantle protections based on race.				
Uses the law to ignore and devalue the lived experiences of marginalized students and families who experience systemic racism and who live in a state and country where symbols of racism abound and where the impacts of systemic racism are constantly felt.				

Published by IDRA, February 1, 2022

Community Voices

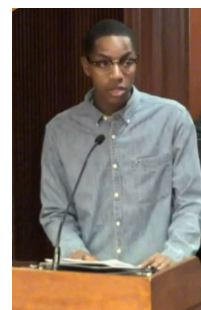


IDRA is grateful to have worked in collaboration with our partners, including the formation of the [Georgia Coalition Against Classroom Censorship](#). The coalition is a group of over 100 teachers, students, parents and organizations who coordinated advocacy to oppose legislation that would censor schools and obstruct students' first amendment right to a free and truthful education.

There was also a notable increase in the number of young people who participated in the legislative process. Students from the [Deep Center](#) in Savannah and the [Georgia Youth Justice Coalition](#) came to the capitol to advocate for their education. They provided powerful testimony and feedback to legislators throughout the session.

- Read statements [against divisive concepts bill](#)
- Read statements on the [passage of these bills](#)

See our [video gallery of students](#) in Georgia and Texas testifying against classroom censorship



Watch [press conference featuring students](#) who were denied the chance to testify against classroom censorship (HB 1084).

Advocacy Continues

The push for a more just and equitable education system is far from over. We will continue to advocate for more diverse and inclusive school environments that equip students for college and career. We will continue to fight for students to access diverse, truthful and culturally-sustaining curriculum. Sign up at [IDRA's Southern Education Equity Network](#) website for upcoming events and actions to stay involved.

IDRA Southern Education Equity Network

A community forum and resource hub for advocates of strong inclusive public education

- ✓ Get advocacy how-to tools
- ✓ Share policy & action updates
- ✓ Plan actions with your group

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April 8, 2022

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