

Illinois Education Association Passes Legislation To Combat The Teacher And Support Staff Shortage And To Improve K-12 Education, Higher Education

April 16 2022 7:15 AM



SPRINGFIELD – The Illinois Education Association (IEA) worked with lawmakers on both sides of the aisle and the governor’s office to ensure the passage of several pieces of pro-public education legislation during the 2021-22 legislative session in Springfield. This legislation will mean stronger K-12 schools and stronger community colleges and

universities for our students, and it will help us address the growing teacher and education support staff shortages in our state.

“We are about to end our second full school year during the COVID-19 pandemic. These have been the hardest years of most of our educators’ careers and are also likely the most difficult two years of our students’ learning careers. Our lawmakers recognized that. They acknowledged that not with mere words, but with action. We thank you for standing by our teachers, support staff, students and communities,” IEA President Kathi Griffin said. “This legislative session brought positive change to every Illinois student from pre-school through college. The legislative initiatives passed by the General Assembly also help to address some of the problems that are leading to the teacher and support staff shortages that are now at a crisis level. But as much great work as we’ve done, more still needs to be done to keep our outstanding, experienced educators in their schools and higher education institutions and to attract bright, ambitious young minds to the profession. We look forward to continuing this important work.”

Legislation passed by lawmakers this session that will have a positive impact on public education:

- **Threat Assessment Law Update (HB 4994)** – This bill ensures safe schools for all Illinois students. It’s a collaboration between IEA and lawmakers on both sides of the aisle. The legislation will mean school district administrations are monitored by Regional Offices of Education to make sure they are in compliance with Illinois’ Threat Assessment Law. That law is designed to help prevent active shooter situations and violence in our schools.
- **COVID Admin Days and Paycheck Protection (HB 1167)** – HB 1167 will provide COVID administrative days to teachers and education support staff who are either vaccinated or who are federally exempt from the vaccine. This ensures teachers and support staff will not have to use sick days for COVID related absences. It also restores any previously used sick days educators may have taken. Included in this legislation is paycheck protection for hourly school employees in the event a school closes for an emergency.
- **Special Education Co-Op Bill (HB 3709)** - This bill protects collective bargaining rights for special education teachers and support staff by ensuring seniority is maintained when a special education co-op is dissolved or combined with another special education co-op.
- **Mental Health Days (HB 4742)** – HB 4742 provides education employees can use sick days for mental health related reasons.
- **Increased education funding, full pension payment and monies to address teacher shortage (HB 900)** -

- Lawmakers allocated an additional \$350 million dollars for public education, which means the evidenced-based funding model for K-12 schools was fully funded.
- The legislature approved sending the state's full payment and additional funding to the Teachers' Retirement System (TRS).
- After years of nearly stagnant funding for universities and community colleges, lawmakers approved a significant increase in higher education funding.
- Also included is \$400,000 for the Educators Rising Program, which is the community-based movement that encourages Illinois high school students to choose to become teachers.

To learn more about IEA's legislative platform click [here](#).

At 135,000 members strong, the Illinois Education Association (IEA-NEA) is the largest union in Illinois. The IEA represents PreK-12 teachers outside the city of Chicago and education support staff, higher education faculty and support staff, retired education employees and students preparing to become teachers, statewide.