

# A VIEW FROM THE HILL

BY NATHAN ARNOLD

We are now in the thick of the 2024 legislative session. The AEA bill is certainly the most significant legislative measure pushed thus far, and we have received many insightful comments from our members. However, this is not the only legislative measure, and one of the most impactful pieces of legislation is slipping through with little attention.

You can see information about this bill and our efforts to defend teachers in this article [here](#).

## **HSB 568 / SSB3042: AN ACT RELATING TO “GROOMING” BEHAVIOR. (IN SUBCOMMITTEE)**

This bill attempts to add “grooming” to the list of mandatory reporting offenses. While we agree that vigilance is necessary and the threats are real, the definition of “grooming” (and the definition of “inappropriate relationship”) has become too broad. Innocent teachers are getting swept up in the net. In fact, one attorney hired by a school district identified “asked how many siblings [student] had and what their names were” as a potential “grooming” activity. We need the definition to be narrower so the innocent don’t get confused with the guilty. We want there to be close relationships with teachers and students free from presumptions of guilt. I’ve seen a lot in my years as a teacher attorney. Believe me when I say it could happen to ANYONE.



## **SF 2087 / HF2054 / SSB 3044 / HSB 520: THERAPEUTIC CLASSROOM FUNDING (IN SUBCOMMITTEE)**

One of the few tools which has proven effective to handle disruptive and/or violent students is the therapeutic classroom initiative spearheaded in the 2020 legislative session. These bills allocate new funds and free up existing funds for therapeutic classrooms. These bills allow for those funds to be redirected for use in the therapeutic classrooms. We hope to see these classrooms given additional funding in the future as the program expands.

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## **HSB 542: RESTRUCTURING OF THE AEA SYSTEM (IN SUBCOMMITTEE)**

The role of AEA special education zones has been on the rise for many years. This bill is an attempt to curtail their executive functions. While it does not technically cut special education funding, it could potentially cut funding for non-special education services provided by AEAs. The bill also raises the minimum teacher salary to \$50,000 for full time teachers with less than twelve years of teaching experience and \$62,000 for those with more than twelve years of teaching experience. While we agree reforms are needed, PEI is registered opposed to this bill because it could be too disruptive to the delicate structure of special education services we currently see in Iowa. Additionally, we have many members who are employees of the AEAs who might see their positions threatened. Finally, we received comments from many of our non-AEA members who raised concerns as well. We appreciate the potential improvement to teacher salaries, but prefer to see that salary increase as a standalone bill.

***PLEASE REACH OUT TO PEI AND YOUR LOCAL  
LEGISLATORS WITH QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS!***

