

## Weekly Legislative Update: **Children's Issues**

Issue Team Chair: Janet Hedgepath

Contact: [jhedgepath@lwvwa.org](mailto:jhedgepath@lwvwa.org)

**February 4, 2024**

### **Bills Needing Action This Week**

*Remember, only authorized members can speak for the League; the Issue Chairs will do that, so please leave the "Organization" box blank. A more powerful influence is many voices speaking for themselves rather than many voices speaking for the League.*

**No action needed this week.**

### **Bills We Support**

**HB1455/SB 5695 Eliminating Child Marriage.** This bill provides that a marriage entered into in which either person has not attained the age of 18 years is void. It further eliminates provisions authorizing a court to waive the age requirement on a showing of necessity.

**HB 1479/SB 5559 Concerning Restraint or Isolation in Public Schools and Educational Programs.** This bill phases out the use of restraint or isolation by school staff and provides training of de-escalation practices.

**HB 2016 Allowing Certain Minors to Contract for Housing and Utilities.**

**HB 2146/SB 5850 Supporting students who are chronically absent and at risk for not graduating high school.**

**HB 2218/SB 5908 Extended foster care for youth 18-21.** Directs the Department of Children, Youth and Families to make a number of changes to the Extended Foster Care Program to reduce barriers to participation.

**SB 5591 Providing Dependent Youth with Financial Education and Support.**

### **Bills We Are Watching**

**HB 1098/SB 5280 Concerning the Duty of Clergy to Report Child Abuse and Neglect.** This bill adds clergy to the list of mandated reporters when there is reasonable cause to believe that a child has suffered abuse or neglect. Currently the amendment to remove the clergy penitent

exception is in dispute between the Senate and the House. We support the bill with the amendment.

**HB 2076/SB 6057 Addressing crimes involving human trafficking and sexual exploitation statewide.** A coordinating committee is established to address the issue of children who are commercially sexually exploited, to examine the practices of local and regional entities involved in addressing sexually exploited children, and to make recommendations on statewide laws and practices.

## How You Can Be Involved

- If you are interested in a particular bill, use the links above to go to the webpage for that bill. These pages include staff summaries and reports including those who testified PRO versus CON on the bill. There is also information about how to access videos of hearings that have been held.
- Read and take action through the [LWVWA Legislative Action Newsletter](#), distributed each Sunday during the legislative session.
- You may also express your opinion on legislation with the LWVWA issue chairs. We will take your perspectives under consideration as we determine our support for legislation and prepare testimony. Please direct questions or comments to [Janet Hedgepath](#), Children's Issues Issue Chair.