

**This Week @ Iowa Capitol | Week 8 | March 6, 2026**

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## Session Countdown Begins

The Iowa Legislature now has just 43 days left in the 100-day session to complete its work. While legislators can go beyond the April 21 target date to end the session, they will lose their clerks and expense checks. When you consider legislators work only half of the week, legislators only have a little more than 20 working days to negotiate a budget, finish property tax reform, and tie up loose ends on policy priorities.



**Reminder! The second legislative deadline is only two weeks away.** By March 20, Senate bills need to be voted out of House committees and House bills need to be voted out of Senate committees. Any bill left behind in committee after March 20 will no longer be eligible for debate. These deadlines do not apply to tax and budget bills.

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# House Subcommittee to Meet Tuesday on Public Assistance & Managed Care

Two weeks ago, the Senate passed their version of “public assistance reform.” This bill ([Senate File 2422](#)) requires citizenship checks for most public assistance programs, including Medicaid. It also says that any request for a federal waiver that changes Medicaid must not increase costs. In addition, the bill requires the Legislature to act if the state wants to Medicaid managed care.

Many advocates are upset that the Legislature would lock the state into a managed care system. Many Medicaid members and their families have said they are not satisfied with this system. Managed care was first put into place by a Governor's Executive Order (without legislative approval). Now it will take legislative approval to make any changes.

Other advocates are concerned about more paperwork to keep their public assistance. Still others say that requiring the Legislature to approve any Medicaid waiver or state plan change could make it harder for the state to try new ideas and be flexible in how it provides services. This bill does not affect fee-for-service Medicaid programs like HIPP (Health Insurance Premium Payment), but it does ban any new fee-for-service programs after January 1, 2027.

**The House subcommittee assigned to Senate File 2422 will meet on Tuesday, March 10 at 8:00 am.** [Rep. Austin Harris](#), [Rep. Ann Meyer](#), and [Rep. Beth Wessel-Kroeschell](#) are the members of this subcommittee. Several advocates are planning to come to the Capitol to speak against this bill. There are many ways you can act on this:

1. **Attend the meeting in person.** It's in Room 103, which is on the first floor of the State Capitol. A meeting room map can be found [here](#). If you plan to speak, plan on keeping your remarks short (2–3 minutes). You can give them more detailed written comments if you have more to say. *Note that you enter the building on the ground floor, with the next level being the first floor.*
2. **Submit your comment online [here](#).** Subcommittee members get copies of these comments before their meeting. The public can also see all the comments submitted at this link.
3. **Watch the subcommittee virtually [here](#).** You can also call in if you don't have a computer (1-408-418-9388; access code: 24899612386). You cannot make comments online, but you can hear what others are saying through this link.

4. **Email your State Representative and let them know what you think about the bill.** You can find your State Representative and their email address [here](#). You can also use our Take Action Center to speed things up [here](#).

The House version of “public assistance reform” includes small changes to the Medicaid for Employed Persons with Disabilities (MEPD) program. This bill ([House File 2716](#)) is still on the House Calendar but has not yet been scheduled for debate. There is a chance that the House will simply replace the Senate’s public assistance reform language with their own language from HF 2716. That would go back to the Senate as an amendment.

The Senate bill does not include the House's changes to the MEPD program. These changes would raise the income limit to 300% of the federal poverty level, not count pension income as assets, and let people pay their MEPD premiums online. The Senate has a separate stand-alone bill ([SF 2315](#)) that makes these changes. It is sponsored by [Sen. Dennis Guth](#) and is currently in the Senate Appropriations Committee, assigned to [Sen. Mark Costello](#), [Sen. Kara Warme](#), and [Sen. Molly Donahue](#). **It’s also our [Bill of the Week!](#)**

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## Other Bills on the Move

Legislators have spent most of the last two weeks debating bills. You can see the full status of bills the Iowa DD Council is tracking in the [Bill Tracker](#).

- [HF 2250](#): Allows Iowa Tuition Grants to be used for **Comprehensive Transition Post-Secondary (CTP)** programs passed the House 96-0. It is now in the [Senate Education Committee](#), but has not been assigned a subcommittee.
- [HF 2292](#): Doubles the number of **beds at Iowa’s state mental hospitals (MHI)** and directs Iowa Medicaid to ask for a waiver to have the Federal government match the state’s costs for these hospital stays (to help keep this “cost neutral”). This bill passed the House (90-0) and is now in the Senate Health & Human Services Committee. The subcommittee is [Sen. Kara Warme](#), [Sen. Mark Costello](#), and [Sen. Mike Zimmer](#).
- [HF 2501](#): Makes changes to **election law**. The original bill was not controversial, but the House amended it to eliminate the ability of another voter to swear to election officials that a person is eligible to vote if they do not have the necessary identification. For instance, if you went to vote with your spouse and one of you forgot their ID, the spouse with the ID could sign an oath (“attest”) that they know the person and swear they are eligible to vote. The Senate (44-0)

took out that change before passing it back to the House for final approval.

- **HF 2518**: Requires **Medicaid rate reviews for HCBS providers** every four years. This bill passed the House (92-0) and is now in the [Senate Health & Human Services Committee](#). The subcommittee includes [Sen. Mark Costello](#), [Sen. Mark Lofgren](#), and [Sen. Mike Zimmer](#). The subcommittee is scheduled to meet on [Tuesday, March 10 at 3:00 pm](#)). Since this is a Senate subcommittee meeting, you can both watch and make comments online during the meeting. You can also make public comments online [here](#).
- **HF 2523**: Allows parents to **directly commit a minor child** (without their consent, without a court order) to an MHI. This bill passed the House 70-21, was assigned to the [Senate Health & Human Services Committee](#), and passed out of subcommittee on Wednesday.
- **HF 2538**: Makes many changes to education processes, including allowing a teacher to request a meeting with a student's **Individualized Education Plan (IEP) team** at any time and requires there to be a federal or legal reason to deny the request. The House plans to debate this bill on Monday, March 9. [Rep. Skyler Wheeler](#) is managing the bill during the debate.
- **HF 2543**: Addresses several barriers to the development of **subacute mental health treatment** options. It passed the House 89-0. Because it has a companion (identical) bill in the Senate, it goes directly to the Senate floor for debate. [Sen. Kara Warme](#) is the floor manager of this bill. It has already made it out of committee in both the House and Senate, so it is now safe from the second funnel deadline.
- **HF 2585**: Requires an **accessible prescription label/info** option be available upon request, free of charge. [Rep. Brett Barker](#), a pharmacist, is managing the bill during the debate. The House plans to debate it on Monday, March 9.
- **HSB 759**: Creates a pilot program to refurbish and recondition **durable medical equipment** purchased under Iowa's Medicaid program. This bill was requested by Easterseals, which fixes used equipment and gives it to Medicaid members free of charge. The bill is in the [House Appropriations Committee](#) and is assigned to a subcommittee ([Rep. Ann Meyer](#), [Rep. Ryan Weldon](#), [Rep. Rob Johnson](#)). The subcommittee is scheduled to meet [Monday, March 9 at 12:45 pm](#). You can watch the subcommittee online or submit comments [here](#).
- **SF 2404**: Establishes a pilot program to allow one rural and one urban school district to have **separate schools for special education students** or students with challenging behaviors. The rural school would be Winterset, and about 12 urban schools would qualify to be a pilot location. This bill is on the Senate

Calendar but has not yet been scheduled for debate. This week a [fiscal note was filed](#) stating that it would cost the state between \$1.2 and \$4.6 million annually. These funds would come from the Area Education Agencies (AEAs). That means other services may need to be cut to make room for this pilot.

- [SF 2417](#): Sets up standards that **AI chatbots** must follow, including noting it is not human, programming it so it does not encourage self-harm, and banning it from pretending to be a therapist or other professional. This bill passed the Senate 48-0, and because it has an identical companion bill on the House side, it went directly to the House Calendar. That means it's safe from the second funnel deadline.
- [SF 2461](#): Automatically enacts a **status quo budget** if the Legislature is unable to pass it by July 1 of each year. This could be problematic for programs like Medicaid. Costs go up each year just to keep Medicaid services the same. Sometimes that is due to federal matching rate changes. If the state was locked into a status quo budget (meaning no change in funding) — that would probably mean a cut to services in Medicaid. This bill passed out of the [Senate Appropriations Committee](#) two weeks ago and is on the Senate Calendar, with [Sen. Ken Rozenboom](#) as floor manager.



**You can watch the debate on any bill by going to the Bill Book on the legislative website. Here's How:**

1. Go to the Bill Book [here](#).
2. On the left, enter the bill number in the “Name” box.
3. Scroll down until you see the “Related Information” in the left side shaded box.
4. If the bill has been debated, you will see “Senate Video Archive” or “House Video Archive.” Click on that link and it will take you to the video of the debate.

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## Iowa Department of Education Reports on "Remarkable Results"

Iowa Department of Education Director McKenzie Snow updated the [House Education Appropriations Subcommittee](#) on Thursday on what she called “remarkable results” in education policy. You can review the Department’s presentation [here](#).

## Results cited by the Iowa Department of Education:

- Science skills increased by as much as 7%.
- Overall school performance increased by 10%.
- Attendance is improving — chronic absenteeism decreased by 6%.
- Work-based learning is growing — 76% increase over the last 2 years.
- Early literacy is improving — 11% gains in third grade learning skills.

Director Snow also talked about the first-in-the-nation approved [“unified allocation plan.”](#) This plan is a block grant approach that hands all federal education money over to the state in order to give the state flexibility in meeting its stated goals. Legislators did ask some questions about this:

- [Rep. Heather Matson](#) asked who was at the table in the development of the unified allocation plan. Director Snow responded that they had “robust pre-consultation” with various stakeholders, including more than 300 curriculum directors, superintendents, and teaching staff. She also said they did a statewide survey which helped them refine their first draft of the plan, and that survey was open to the public. She did admit that the majority of the feedback they received from the survey was from educators and school administrators. She said a detailed list of the feedback received is included in the [state plan](#).
- Rep. Matson also stated that she had heard in earlier messages that the unified allocation plan saved money and asked if that was true. Director Snow responded that the plan does not generate savings but instead redirects funds that were previously used for compliance to support educational activities. Snow said that they had identified \$29 million in funds that schools dedicated to complying with federal laws and reporting that can now be used to directly support students.
- Another legislator asked about a typical class mix of special education and English Language Learners (ELL). Snow stated that a typical class of 25 includes two ELLs and three special education students.

It is important to note that in the 60+ minutes of the presentation, special education was mentioned for the first time in the final 20 seconds. In answering an earlier question, Director Snow disclosed that there is still an achievement gap between special education students and their peers.

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# Mark Your Calendars!

Iowans with disabilities will again be gathering at the State Capitol to show broad support for Iowa Medicaid, Work Without Worry, and other policies that help Iowans with disabilities thrive in their community.

Find out more and register to attend Disability Advocacy Day [here](#).



**Find all the bills** we are tracking at:  
[iowaddcouncil.org/bill-tracker](http://iowaddcouncil.org/bill-tracker)

**Take action on bills** by emailing your legislators at:  
[iowaddcouncil.org/take-action-center](http://iowaddcouncil.org/take-action-center)

**Find local legislative town hall meetings** in our calendar  
at: [iowaddcouncil.org/calendar](http://iowaddcouncil.org/calendar)

**Find our bills of the week at:**  
[iowaddcouncil.org/bill-of-the-week](http://iowaddcouncil.org/bill-of-the-week)