



JUNE 2025 | ISSUE 22

Public Policy News

A monthly dispatch from the AAUW California Public Policy Team

A WIN FOR PUBLIC POLICY

Thank you for your support!

We are thrilled to let you know that we have been reelected to serve you as AAUW California Public Policy Co-chairs! Our new term begins on July 1, 2025 ends on June 30, 2027. We thank you for your ongoing encouragement and support! We will continue to work hard to ensure that the great work that you are doing on the ground everyday is supported and amplified --and to ensure that Public Policy continues to be a central priority for AAUW CA.

In Solidarity,
Missy and Amy

LEG AGENDA UPDATE

Majority of bills move forward

Nineteen of the bills on our 2025 Legislative Agenda have passed out of committee and will soon be heard on the floor of the initiating house. Of the seven bills on the Agenda that we opposed, four are now dead. See the [2025 Bill Tracker](#) for the latest status of all the bills on our Leg Agenda.

Go to page 2 of this newsletter to learn more about "A" priority bill AB 1098 "Pregnancy Protections for All Students Act", sponsored by AAUW California. AB 1098 is now headed to the Assembly floor.

SUMMER VACATION

Taking a mini-break from PP News

PP News will follow Board to Board and other AAUW California publications and take a summer break in July and August. The next installment of PP News will be in your inboxes in early September. Please follow us on Resistbot and BlueSky for summer action items and updates.

IF YOU MISSED IT...

The Oregon Online Branch hosted a meeting on May 13, 2025 featuring Malena Clark, AAUW California Public Policy Intern and key architect of the recently launched [Take Action spreadsheet](#). Malena provided instruction on how to use the sheet. Find the recording [HERE](#).

BRANCH PUBLIC POLICY CHAIRS' MEETING

LAST MEETING OF THE YEAR
Thursday June 5, 2025
at 3:00pm Pacific



ZOOM LINK [HERE](#)

Click [HERE](#) for meeting information.



SIGN UP FOR
ACTION ALERTS
[HERE.](#)

WHERE IS THAT?

Key links to your public policy resources:

- [Google Workspace](#)
- [Branch liaisons](#)
- Contact us at publicpolicy@aauw-ca.org
- Tell us about your branch public policy events by filling out this [form](#).

click here!

[2025
Bill Tracker](#)

Take Action in June

Focus: Oppose Private School Vouchers



AAUW California has launched our own action-items database! However, we know that the spreadsheet casts a very wide net in terms of issue areas and resources, so **we want to continue to provide a short list of targeted action-items for you each month.**



We will continue to ask you to take action by choosing one self-focused, one other-focused, and one political-focused item from the list below. This month the topic area is...

Take Action: Oppose Private School Vouchers



Self-Focused: Education

- Learn about private school vouchers, the billionaires pushing them, and how they harm students by diverting money away from public schools
- Learn how the Educational Choice for Children Act of 2025 (ECCA), H.R. 833/S. 292, would create a tax break for the wealthy to fund private school vouchers



Other-Focused: Education & Connection

- Tell a few people (2-10) about ECCA and some of the potential impacts if it passes
- Share with a few people (2-10) the letter opposing ECCA that AAUW National has signed on to along with 93 other organizations



Politically-Focused: Outreach to Legislators (State/Federal)

- Text SIGN PUBZVZ to 50409 to contact your U.S. Senators and Representative, urging them to oppose the Educational Choice for Children Act of 2025 which would divert funds from public schools and harm the most vulnerable students, while creating a tax break for the wealthy

Follow AAUW California's Petitions Page on Resistbot

Highlighting "A" priority bill AB 1098

Pregnancy Protections for All Students Act

We would like to take this opportunity to tell you about AB 1098 (Fong) "Pregnancy Protections for All Students Act", sponsored by AAUW California. The author's office agreed to amend the bill to address some of our concerns, so this bill was recently moved up on our Legislative Agenda from "B" to "A" priority.

AB 1098 provides protections for pregnant undergraduate students akin to those offered to graduate students at public institutions in California. In addition, the bill strengthens protections for both groups and requires colleges and universities to have more robust and effective means of informing students about their rights under federal and state law.

AB 1098 has passed out of committee and will be heard on the Assembly floor soon. Text SIGN PCNJJCJ to 50409 to contact your Assemblymember and urge them to vote YES on AB 1098.



For online outreach to CA representatives on A-bills, follow AAUW California's Petitions Page on Resistbot

Upcoming Anti-LGBTQ+ Supreme Court Decision: Impacts on K-12 Education in California

By Missy Maceyko, Co-chair, Public Policy Committee

During LGBTQ+ pride month, we will get a decision in Mahmoud v. Taylor, a case involving the LGBTQ+ community that is currently being considered by the Supreme Court of the United States. The outcome of this case may have an impact on the important legislative and on-the-ground work that AAUW California has been doing (via the the School Board Project (SBP)) to protect historically accurate, diverse, and inclusive curricula in K-12 education and schools.

In the Mahmoud case, a coalition of Muslim, Roman Catholic, and Ukrainian Orthodox parents in the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) in Maryland are asking for an opt-out provision for diverse and inclusive storybooks that include a normative portrayal of LGBTQ+ families, such as Pride Puppy, a rhyming alphabet book that tells the story of a family having a fun day together at a LGBTQ+ pride event. The parents in this case argue that requiring their children to engage with story books like Pride Puppy, and instruction around them, will be a violation of their religious beliefs. Specifically, these parents claim that lack of an opt-out provision is a violation of their First Amendment rights to freely exercise their religion, impeding their ability to instruct their children on faith-based issues related to gender and sexuality and to control when and how these issues are introduced.

After updating the curriculum to include more diverse and inclusive storybooks in 2022, the MCPS school board in this case initially tried to accommodate opt-out requests from parents. However, the school board received such an influx of opt-out requests that course administration became unmanageable. Opt-out policies are expensive, costly for students, schools, and taxpayers. This means that mass opt-outs can put further stress on already stressed logistical systems within financially burdened school districts.

On top of the logistical and actual costs and administrative struggles created by the mass opt-out requests, the MCPS school board in this case also noted that the influx of requests fundamentally “undermined the schools’ educational obligations toward inclusion, equity, and respect.” Opt-outs can hurt kids whose lives and families are mirrored in the books, positioning LGBTQ+ families’ experiences as something potentially problematic and harmful to others. It also teaches young people that they can opt out of teachings that encourage being decent to all humans, even those who do not look, think, act, or love in the way that their families do. Lack of access to and understanding of diverse experiences and viewpoints and the inability to engage meaningfully with widespread inclusivity also leaves the opted-out students themselves less well-equipped to move forward to function in a diverse world, a pluralistic democracy, and a global workforce.

Upcoming Anti-LGBTQ+ Supreme Court Decision: Impacts on K-12 Education in California, con.

Finally, opt-outs for LGBTQ+ material on religious grounds may also open the flood gates for opt-outs on any topic that is listed as potentially problematic in religious teaching and texts. Echoing some of these concerns, Justice Sonia Sotomayor and Justice Elena Kagan gave voice to this issue during oral arguments, noting the potentially broad scope of the parents' position when, historically, there have also been objections to "biographical material about women who have been recognized for achievement outside their home," as well as books featuring divorce, interfaith marriage, and immodest dress.

Based on a 2008 case in Massachusetts, which was not taken up by the Supreme Court, there is precedent for ruling against these kinds of opt outs because participation in public school instruction that simply exposes a child to ideas that conflict with the religious beliefs of their parents, "does not inhibit the parent from instructing the child differently." However, due to the direction that questioning took during oral arguments, many legal scholars are predicting that the court will find in favor of the parents. A decision is expected in the case by the end of June 2025.

Parents have the ability to opt their children out of some material in California, as well, perhaps most notably around comprehensive sexual health education. However, these opt-out provisions are limited in scope. As the protection and expansion of historically accurate, diverse, and inclusive curricula in K-12 education in California has been an important focus for both AAUW CA's School Board Project and our legislative priorities, the possibility that the decision in *Mahmoud* will spark expanded opt-out requests on religious grounds is critically important for us to track. While protections for inclusive curricula remain in place in California, an outcome in favor of the parents in this case will likely create a wave of social and legal challenges, including a call for more expansive opt-out policies, which will have an impact on how we continue to engage in meaningful work around this priority area in the future. One possible outcome of this is that many districts will pull back on their DEI materials, setting up a potential collision course with existing CA laws.



*If you are using this text for a newsletter after June, please click the link below. An updated version of this article will be available after the decision in June 2025.

CLICK [HERE](#) TO ACCESS A TEXT-BASED COPY OF THE NL ARTICLE
*UPDATED VERSION AVAILABLE AFTER DECISION