
SENATE BILL 6018

State of Washington

56th Legislature

1999 Regular Session

By Senators McAuliffe, Bauer and Rasmussen

Read first time 02/22/1999. Referred to Committee on Education.

1 AN ACT Relating to the creation of the temporary citizens'
2 commission on school funding and education excellence; creating new
3 sections; making appropriations; and declaring an emergency.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) The legislature finds that the common
6 schools of Washington began to implement comprehensive performance-
7 based education reforms in 1993 as provided in House Bill No. 1209 and
8 subsequent legislation. The principal features of the present system
9 for funding the operation of the common schools were enacted in 1977.
10 The more fully schools and school districts implement performance-based
11 educational programs, the more poorly aligned Washington's school
12 funding and school program delivery systems become. The governor's
13 council on education reform and funding, created by executive order in
14 1991, did not adopt recommendations on the redesign of the funding
15 system to align with the performance-based instructional program model.

16 (2) The legislature finds that the public school funding system in
17 Washington has developed in response to conditions requiring a
18 substantial increase in state involvement but which have changed over
19 time. The funding system, stressing detailed formulas and an emphasis

1 on input measures, has become progressively rigid, resistant to change
2 and innovation, and reflective of a distrust of the ability of school
3 districts to efficiently and effectively manage funds and achieve
4 educational goals. Funding decisions are increasingly based on
5 projections, practices, and assumptions that may not be congruent with
6 the realities of the costs of educating children. School funding
7 crises occur cyclically. School levies fund up to eighteen percent of
8 the average school budget, but their passage depends on supermajorities
9 of district voters, conditions that inject further instability into the
10 process. Recurrent local levy failures, variances in property values
11 among districts, and real or perceived inequities in resource
12 distribution patterns are further symptoms of profound problems.
13 Change in such a setting, if possible at all, must occur on the margin.

14 (3) The legislature finds that on the eve of the twenty-first
15 century, it is unclear in what manner and the extent to which the
16 funding system must be changed to render it more relevant, flexible,
17 and responsive to accommodate efforts to shift the education system to
18 a performance-based system, render it consistent with the performance-
19 based learning system that is under development by the commission on
20 student learning, or increase public trust in the adequacy and
21 effectiveness of the system.

22 (4) The legislature further finds that many schools and school
23 districts in Washington have developed creative approaches to helping
24 students achieve the essential academic learning requirements and the
25 goals of the basic education act as codified in RCW 28A.150.210. The
26 successes already achieved by schools and school districts on the
27 Washington assessment of student learning constitute evidence that the
28 experiences of schools and school districts in Washington may suggest
29 viable strategies for designing performance-based funding programs.

30 (5) The legislature recognizes that as state-wide accountability
31 systems are developed and implemented to hold students, schools, and
32 school districts accountable for improving student performance, it is
33 appropriate and necessary to conduct a fundamental reexamination of
34 education funding.

35 (6) The legislature, therefore, finds it prudent to create a
36 temporary commission of public citizens to study and report on state
37 funding for education in the public schools and for this commission to
38 complete its work and report its findings and recommendations to the
39 legislature, governor, and the public by December 2000.

1 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** (1) For the purposes of this act,
2 "commission" means the temporary citizens' commission on school funding
3 and education excellence.

4 (2) The temporary citizens' commission on school funding and
5 education excellence is created to conduct a comprehensive review of
6 Washington's system of funding the operation of the public schools, its
7 strengths and weaknesses, the considerations and conditions that have
8 shaped and perpetuate it, its advantages and disadvantages, other
9 systems and approaches that might be considered as alternatives, their
10 advantages and disadvantages, and to develop comprehensive
11 recommendations to the legislature concerning common school finance.

12 (3) The commission shall be composed of:

13 (a) Eleven members of the general public appointed by the governor,
14 three of whom shall be professional educators and eight of whom may not
15 be professional educators but shall be generally representative of the
16 social and economic diversity of the state;

17 (b) One member appointed by each co-speaker of the house of
18 representatives and one member from each major political party
19 appointed by the president of the senate; and

20 (c) The superintendent of public instruction, the chair of the
21 state board of education, and the director of the office of financial
22 management, who shall be ex officio members of the commission.

23 (4) The governor shall encourage public members from across the
24 state to apply for membership on the commission, and to include a brief
25 statement of their interest in the commission as part of their
26 application. These applications shall be taken into account during the
27 selection process. The governor shall attempt to include parents and
28 individuals with expertise in education finance.

29 (5) All members of the commission shall be voting members. The
30 members of the commission shall designate two of the public members to
31 serve as chair and vice-chair by majority vote.

32 (6) The commission shall conduct its business as described in
33 section 3 of this act. The commission shall expire June 30, 2001.

34 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** (1) The commission shall organize and
35 conduct a review of public school funding in Washington state through
36 a two stage process. The first stage shall commence on the effective
37 date of this act and conclude with the presentation of an interim
38 report to the public, the legislature, and the governor by December 31,

1 1999. The commission's interim report shall describe its first year
2 activities, its findings with respect to significant aspects of the
3 school finance funding system, its work plan to address these aspects
4 during the second stage of the review, including its plans with respect
5 to public communications, hearings or meetings, its budget needs for
6 the second stage of the study, and its preliminary recommendations.
7 The second stage shall commence on January 1, 2000, and continue until
8 December 31, 2000. During this stage the commission shall complete its
9 comprehensive review and present its full report and recommendations.

10 The commission shall serve as a resource to the education and fiscal
11 committees of the legislature during the 2000 and 2001 legislative
12 sessions and shall make periodic reports to these committees during the
13 interim between sessions.

14 (2) During its deliberations, the commission shall review and
15 consider:

16 (a) The basic education act;

17 (b) The recommendations of the commission on student learning;

18 (c) The operations of the present state funding system and the
19 relationship of its components to the efficient and effective
20 achievement of state goals;

21 (d) The relationship of the school levy program as presently
22 constituted and its relationship to basic education, the achievement of
23 educational goals, and its advantages and disadvantages;

24 (e) The steps needed to assure the public, the legislature, and the
25 governor that schools are operating at their optimal levels of
26 efficiency and effectiveness using performance measurements;

27 (f) Actual and proposed systems of operational funding and state
28 and local interaction in place in other jurisdictions;

29 (g) Experiences and programs of successful comprehensive school or
30 school districts in Washington, with a special emphasis on the results
31 of the Washington assessment of student learning; and

32 (h) Should an opportunity school or similar program be established
33 by the legislature, the per student costs, and the effectiveness of
34 this program in improving student achievement.

35 (3) On the basis of the criteria in subsection (2) of this section,
36 and other reviews as determined by the commission, including the
37 experiences of model districts, the commission shall specify the
38 aspects and qualities that would constitute an improved education
39 funding system for the public schools. In making its recommendations,

1 the commission shall consider the actual cost of providing for both the
2 immediate and future needs of students.

3 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** (1) The commission may employ a staff
4 director and such other staff as it deems necessary, all of whom shall
5 serve at the pleasure of the commission. Responsibilities for the day-
6 to-day management of the commission staff organization may be delegated
7 to the staff director. The commission may seek such consultant and
8 other outside assistance as it deems necessary.

9 (2) The commission shall seek and may receive gifts and grants for
10 the purposes of fulfilling its responsibilities. Public funds may be
11 used by the commission as matching funds.

12 (3) The commission shall create advisory or technical committees,
13 including those composed and representative of professional education
14 associations, as it deems necessary to fulfill its tasks. State and
15 local education agencies are requested to make available information to
16 assist the commission in carrying out its assigned tasks.

17 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** (1) The sum of fifty thousand dollars, or as
18 much thereof as may be necessary, is appropriated for the fiscal year
19 ending June 30, 1999, from the general fund to the commission for the
20 purposes of this act.

21 (2) The sum of one hundred thousand dollars, or as much thereof as
22 may be necessary, is appropriated for the fiscal year ending June 30,
23 2000, from the general fund to the commission for the purposes of this
24 act.

25 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 6.** This act is necessary for the immediate
26 preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of the
27 state government and its existing public institutions, and takes effect
28 immediately.

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