
Education Committee

HB 3110

Brief Description: Providing for an emergency school repair and renovation account.

Sponsors: Representatives Cox, Haigh, Schoesler and Armstrong.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Creates a grant program to help small school districts pay for the nonrecurring costs associated with urgent facilities repair and renovation.
- Revises the Common School Construction Fund to permit excess monies to be appropriated for the grant program without the requirement that the funds be replaced before the end of the next fiscal biennium.

Hearing Date: 2/2/04

Staff: Susan Morrissey (786-7111).

Background:

In 2001, Congress authorized and funded the Emergency School Repair and Renovation Grant program. Through the program, school districts obtained one-time grants for urgent health and safety risks, fire and building code deficiencies, access for disabled students, and asbestos abatement or removal. A minimum of 16 percent of the funding was reserved for high-poverty districts and 21 percent was reserved for rural districts. The remaining funds were available for any district. At least 10 percent of the funds were required to be held in reserve for cost-overruns.

The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) administered Washington's participation in the program. Districts with fewer than 10,000 students were limited to a grant of \$100,000. Districts with more students had a grant limit based on a percentage of enrollment.

Through the program, 97 school districts received almost \$9.5 million for projects requested in 2002. There were 31 districts on a waiting list for any funds remaining in the reserves after all cost over-runs were covered. All projects had to be completed by September 30, 2003. No additional federal funding is anticipated for the program.

Summary of Bill:

The Washington Emergency School Repair and Renovation Grant Program is created. The program is intended to assist Class Two school districts with the nonrecurring costs associated

with urgent facilities repair and renovations. Grants could be used for projects related to health and safety risks, fire and building code deficiencies, access for disabled students, and asbestos abatement or removal.

The program will be administered by OSPI. The types of projects that might be funded in a given year will be determined by any legislation that provides funding for the projects. First priority in the grants will be given to small and rural school districts that have attempted unsuccessfully to pass a school levy or bond that included the requested project. OSPI may adopt additional priorities that provide a determined percentage for high poverty school districts and for small and rural districts that have been successful in passing a school levy or bond. The agency will define the terms "high poverty school district" and "small and rural school district". The agency will also create a streamlined application and reporting process for the grants.

Some of the types of projects that may be funded are described. The grants cannot be used for recurring costs, new facilities, stadiums, athletic or exhibition facilities, or facilities where admission is charged to the general public. The grants also cannot be used for facility maintenance or to cover the cost of the grant application.

The Washington Emergency School Repair and Renovation Grant Account is created. Appropriated funds and any federal funds for the program will be deposited in the account. The funds may be withdrawn by the SPI and used for the program. The account is subject to allotment but no appropriation is required for expenditures.

The law governing the Common School Construction Fund is revised to allow excess money in the fund to be used for the grant program. Money used for that purpose need not be returned to the fund by the end of the fiscal biennium that follows.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 29, 2004.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.