

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1066

As Passed House:

April 20, 2005

Title: An act relating to learning assistance program distribution formula.

Brief Description: Revising learning assistance program distribution formula.

Sponsors: By Representatives McDermott, Quall, P. Sullivan, Haigh, Hunter and Ormsby; by request of Governor Locke.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 1/24/05, 2/15/05 [DP];

Appropriations: 2/24/05, 4/18/05 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 4/20/05, 82-15.

Brief Summary of Bill

- The funding formula for the Learning Assistance Program is revised from one based on 50 percent for assessment results and 50 percent for family need to one based solely on family need.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Quall, Chair; P. Sullivan, Vice Chair; Talcott, Ranking Minority Member; Anderson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Curtis, Haigh, Hunter, McDermott, Santos and Shabro.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 1 member: Representative Tom.

Staff: Susan Morrissey (786-7111).

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 28 members: Representatives Sommers, Chair; Fromhold, Vice Chair; Alexander, Ranking Minority Member; Anderson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; McDonald, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Armstrong, Bailey, Buri, Clements, Cody, Conway, Darneille, Dunshee, Grant, Haigh, Hunter, Kagi, Kenney, Kessler, Linville, McDermott, McIntire, Miloscia, Pearson, Priest, Schual-Berke, Talcott and Walsh.

Staff: Denise Graham (786-7137).

Background:

Washington's Learning Assistance Program (LAP) has been in operation since 1987. The program is designed to help students who need additional time and assistance to achieve basic skills in reading, mathematics, language arts and academic readiness. School districts apply to the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) for program funds, each submitting a program plan to the agency. The OSPI must approve the districts' program plans before any funds are released. The plans may include a variety of activities and services targeted to struggling students, including extended learning, focused professional development, consulting teachers, tutoring, and parent outreach and support.

Since the second Doran decision in 1983, funding for struggling students has been considered part of basic education. The Legislature has appropriated about \$127 million for the LAP program for the 2003-05 biennium. The money is allocated to school districts using a formula that includes both student achievement on norm-referenced tests and a poverty factor. The formula, which is not codified, is included in the state's biennial budget. Once the districts have received the funding, they may distribute it as necessary to assist eligible low-performing students anywhere in their district. In many districts, the LAP funds are blended with funding from the federal Title I program. During the biennium, Washington received more than \$310 million for the Title I program. The combination of these funds provided about \$437 million to school districts during the 2003-05 biennium to meet the specific learning needs of struggling students.

The formula for determining budget allocations to the program was changed in 2004. Beginning with the 2005 budget, 50 percent of the funding will be based on assessment results and the other 50 percent will be based on one or more family income factors measuring economic need. The law does not specify which assessments or income factors will be used in the budget formula.

Former Governor Locke proposed changing the formula to one based totally on economic need. He also proposed a hold harmless provision so that no district's LAP funding would be lower than the amount the district received in the previous year. Finally, he proposed an increase in program funding of \$41,000,000 for the 2005-07 biennium.

Summary of Bill:

The funding formula for the Learning Assistance Program is revised from one based on 50 percent for assessment results and 50 percent for family need to one based solely on family need.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: (Education) The 2004 Legislature revised the LAP program to increase its effectiveness and create funding stability for local school districts. Under the formula in place before this year, school districts that were successful in raising student achievement lost program funding. Last year, the House passed legislation that would have based program funding entirely on the poverty of students since research shows that there is a high correlation between poverty and academic challenge. Although the House proposal did not prevail, former Governor Locke proposes it again in this legislation. The policy will help school districts offer and sustain effective programs that assist struggling students to meet the state's academic standards. Many education organizations believe that it is the best policy for driving LAP funding to school districts. However, the organizations also want to be clear that no school district should lose the funding they already receive as a result of this policy change, so the budget needs to include a hold harmless provision for the program.

Testimony For: (Appropriations) The existing LAP formula provides perverse incentives by funding on low test scores. Moving to a formula that provides funding based solely on poverty would provide a more stable funding source and would recognize the on-going need of districts with high poverty.

Testimony Against: (Education) None.

Testimony Against: (Appropriations) None.

Persons Testifying: (Education) (In support) Representative McDermott, prime sponsor; Jennifer Priddy, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; Mike Merlino, Evergreen School District; Christie Perkins, Washington State Special Education Coalition; Rainer Houser, Association of Washington School Principals; and Gary King, Washington Education Association.

Persons Testifying: (Appropriations) Jennifer Priddy, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; and Randy Parr, Washington Education Association.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: (Education) None.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: (Appropriations) None.