
Appropriations Committee

E2SHB 1682

Brief Description: Concerning homeless students.

Sponsors: House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Fey, Stambaugh, Walsh, Riccelli, Goodman, Orwall, Zeiger, Appleton, Van De Wege, Lytton, Gregerson, Reykdal, Tarleton, Ortiz-Self, Kagi, Carlyle, Wylie, Bergquist, S. Hunt, Tharinger, Senn, Robinson, Moscoso, Pollet, Walkinshaw, McBride and Jinkins).

Brief Summary of Bill

- Establishes a competitive grant program to evaluate and award grants to school districts to pilot increased identification of homeless students and the capacity to provide support.
- Establishes a grant program that links homeless children with stable housing.
- Modifies data collection and reporting on homeless children by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Hearing Date: 1/18/16

Staff: Jessica Harrell (786-7349).

Background:

According to a 2015 report from the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), between the 2008-09 school year and the 2013-14 school year, the state experienced a 56 percent increase in the number of enrolled homeless students reported by school districts. During the 2013-14 school year, 32,494 students were identified as homeless. The percentage of homeless students meeting standard on assessments is much lower than the percentage for all students statewide. Homeless students had a 46.1 percent four-year graduation rate and a 31.5 percent cohort dropout rate, compared to an all student statewide graduation rate of 77.2 percent and a cohort dropout rate of 12.3 percent.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

State law establishes homeless student data collection and reporting requirements for school districts and the OSPI. School districts are required to track additional expenditures for transporting homeless students using a uniform process established by the OSPI. The OSPI is required to post on its web site the total expenditures related to the transportation of homeless students, and is required also to report specific homeless student data to the Governor and the Legislature every two years. Reported data must include information about "unaccompanied homeless students." Legislation adopted in 2015 (*i.e.*, 2SSB 5404, enacted as ch. 69, Laws of 2015) defined "unaccompanied homeless student" as a student who is not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian and is without a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence as set forth in the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

The Department of Commerce (Department) has a number of homeless assistance and prevention programs within its portfolio, including:

- Consolidated Homeless Grant (CHG). The CHG combines state homeless resources into a single grant opportunity for county governments and other designated entities.
- Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG). The ESG is funded by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transitions to Housing Act of 2009. The Department is a grantee of HUD and administers this award for eligible counties and cities that are not direct recipients of HUD. The purpose of the ESG program is to provide homelessness prevention assistance to households who would otherwise become homeless and to provide assistance to rapidly re-house persons who are experiencing homelessness.
- Independent Youth Housing Program (IYHP). The IYHP provides rental assistance and case management for eligible youth who have aged out of the state foster care system. The Department contracts with five agencies to provide program services.
- Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS). The HMIS is used by state and federally funded homeless and housing service providers to collect and manage data gathered during the course of providing housing assistance to people already experiencing homelessness and to households at-risk of losing their housing.

Summary of Bill:

Competitive Grant Program.

The OSPI is tasked with creating a competitive grant process to evaluate and award state-funded grants to school districts to pilot increased identification of homeless students and the capacity of the districts to provide support. Support may include homeless education liaisons. The process must complement any similar federal grant program or programs in order to minimize agency overhead and administrative costs for the Superintendent of Public Instruction and school districts. Districts may access both federal and state money to identify and support homeless students.

Award criteria for the grants must be based on demonstrated need and may consider the number or overall percentage, or both, of homeless children and youths enrolled in preschool, elementary, and secondary school in the district and the ability of the district to meet these needs. School districts may not use grant funds to supplant existing federal, state, or local resources for homeless student supports.

Housing Grant Program.

The Department, in consultation with the OSPI, is charged with administering a grant program that links homeless students, their families, and unaccompanied homeless students with stable housing located in the homeless student's school district. This competitive grant process may make grant awards to school districts partnered with eligible organizations.

In determining which school districts receive grants, preference must be given to districts with a demonstrated commitment of partnership and history with eligible organizations. "Eligible organization" means any local government, local housing authority, Regional Support Network, nonprofit community or neighborhood-based organization, federally recognized Indian tribe within the state, or regional or statewide nonprofit housing assistance organization.

Beneficiaries of funds from the grant program must be from very low-income households. "Very low-income" is defined as a family or unrelated persons living together whose adjusted income is less than 50 percent of the median family income, adjusted for household size, for the county where the grant recipient is located.

Applications for the grant program must include contractual agreements between the housing providers and the school districts defining the responsibilities and commitments of each party to identify, house, and support students. Eligible activities for assistance include, but are not limited to:

- rental assistance, including security deposits, utilities, and moving expenses;
- transportation assistance, including gasoline for vehicles and bus passes;
- emergency shelter; and housing stability case management.

Grantee school districts and the eligible organizations must report to the OSPI and the Department of Commerce on the findings of the grantee, the housing stability of the homeless families, and the academic performance of the grantee population.

Data on all grant program participants must be entered into and tracked through the Department of Commerce's Homeless Client Management Information System. Program review and monitoring may be conducted concurrently with other program reviews and monitoring.

Unaccompanied Homeless Students."

The OSPI's data collection and reporting requirements on homeless children are changed by modifying the definition of "unaccompanied homeless students." "Unaccompanied homeless student" is defined as a student who is not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian and is homeless.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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