

SENATE BILL REPORT

E2SHB 1682

As of March 20, 2015

Title: An act relating to improving educational outcomes for homeless students through increased in-school guidance supports, housing stability, and identification services.

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 History: Passed House: 3/06/15, 82-16.

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 3/19/15.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Staff: Susan Mielke (786-7422)

Background: In 2014 the Legislature enacted legislation requiring school districts and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to report to the Governor and Legislature the number of identified homeless students enrolled in public schools and specified academic performance measures for those students. The assessment data reported must be disaggregated by subgroups.

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act is a federal law that provides federal grant funding to states for the purpose of supporting school districts to serve homeless students. The Act also requires school districts to report annually the number of homeless students enrolled in schools. It defines homeless children as individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. According to the OSPI website, Washington receives approximately \$950,000 in funding each year under the Act. The federal funds are provided as competitive grants to school districts.

The Department of Commerce (Department) administers housing programs designed specifically to address the needs of low-income and homeless populations. The Department implements the Washington Homeless Client Management Information System for the ongoing collection of information about all homeless individuals in the state. The

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.

information comes from the Washington homeless census and from state agencies and community organizations providing services to homeless individuals and families.

Summary of Bill: OSPI's required data collection and reporting on homeless students is expanded to include unaccompanied homeless students. An unaccompanied homeless student is defined as a student who is not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian and is homeless.

OSPI must create 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. District support may include education liaisons. The process must complement any similar federal grant program to minimize overhead and administrative costs. Homeless students are defined as students without a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence as set forth in the McKinney-Vento Act. The criteria to award the state grants must be based on the demonstrated need of the school districts, the ability of the district to meet the need, and the quality of the applications submitted. School districts may not use the state grants to supplant existing federal, state, or local resources for homeless student supports. School districts may access both federal and state funding to identify and support homeless students.

The Department in consultation with OSPI must develop and administer a competitive grant program. The stated goal of the grant program is to provide educational stability for homeless students and their families or unaccompanied homeless students by promoting housing stability in the homeless student's school district. The grants are awarded to school districts that partner with an eligible organization – a local government, local housing authority, regional support network, nonprofit community or neighborhood-based organization, federally recognized Indian tribe, or regional or statewide nonprofit housing assistance organization. Preference must be given to school districts with a demonstrated commitment of partnership and history with eligible organizations. The grant funds may be used for, but not limited to, rent assistance, transportation assistance, emergency shelter, and housing stability case management. Beneficiaries of the grants must be from very low-income households, which are defined as a family or unrelated persons living together whose adjusted income is less than 50 percent of the median family income for the county where the grant recipient is located. Grantee school districts in partnership with eligible organizations must collect specified data and report it to the Department and OSPI. Data on all program participants must be entered into the Washington Homeless Client Management Information System. Any program review and monitoring may be conducted concurrently with other reviews and monitoring conducted by the Department.

If specific funding for the OSPI competitive grant program and the Department's housing stability program is not provided in the omnibus appropriations act then the provisions addressing the housing assistance program are null and void.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on March 11, 2015

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: As a full-time homeless liaison for a school district. All schools need full-time homeless liaisons. Counselors, superintendents, and other school employees do not have the time necessary to commit to this role. Many of the homeless students have greater mobility. Under the program in which the Tacoma Housing Department and the school district has partner to provide housing support which has eliminated the mobility of these students and families. It is better to catch students and families who are new to homelessness. Schools are the gateway to homeless students and their families to getting services but schools need additional support and resources. Transportation under McKinney-Vento is a big cost to the state and can be eliminated by providing support for these students and their families to have housing stability.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Fey, prime sponsor; Katara Jordan, Columbia Legal Services; Jene Jones, League of Education Voters; Charlie Brown, Tacoma Public Schools; Miles Nowlin, Citizen.

Persons Signed in to Testify But Not Testifying: PRO: Sabian Hart-Wall, Foster Youth.