

SENATE BILL REPORT

3SHB 1682

As of February 24, 2016

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

Brief Description: Improving educational outcomes for homeless students through increased in-school guidance supports, housing stability, and identification services.

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; 2/10/16, 68-28.

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 3/19/15, 2/22/16.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Staff: Ailey Kato (786-7434)

Background: 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. It defines "homeless children" as individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. Under the Act, school districts are required to designate a homeless student education liaison to ensure that homeless children and youth are identified and served. The liaison must provide public notice to homeless families – in the community and at school – and facilitate access to school services including transportation. School districts are also required to annually report data regarding homeless students to the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). According to the OSPI website, Washington receives approximately \$950,000 in funding each year under the Act.

In 2014, the Legislature passed legislation requiring school districts and OSPI to report specified data on homeless students. Additionally the legislation directed OSPI to distribute best practices for choosing and training school district-designated homeless student liaisons, and to develop or acquire a short video that provides information on how to identify signs that indicate a student may be homeless.

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.

Legislation in 2015 defined "unaccompanied homeless student" as a student who is not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian, and is homeless. It also required that OSPI report the number of identified unaccompanied homeless students enrolled in public schools.

The Department of Commerce (Commerce) administers housing programs designed specifically to address the needs of low-income and homeless populations. The Washington Homeless Client Management Information System is implemented by Commerce for the ongoing collection of information about all homeless individuals in the state. The information comes from the Washington homeless census and from state agencies and community organizations providing services to homeless individuals and families.

Summary of Bill: School Support for Homeless Students and Unaccompanied Youth. OSPI must create a competitive grant process to evaluate and award state-funded three-year grants to school districts to increase identification of homeless students and the capacity of the districts to provide support for homeless students, which may include education liaisons. The process must minimize OSPI overhead and administrative costs. A definition of homeless students, which is the same as the federal definition, is provided.

The state grant award criteria 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. Preference must be given to districts that demonstrate a commitment to serving the needs of unaccompanied youth.

Districts receiving grants must measure during the academic year how often each student physically moves, what services families or unaccompanied youth could access, and whether or not a family or unaccompanied youth received stable housing by the end of the school year.

School districts may access both federal and state funding to identify and support homeless students. School districts may not use the state grant funds to supplant existing federal, state, or local resources for homeless student supports.

Each school district that has identified more than 10 unaccompanied youth must establish a building point of contact in each middle and high school. These points of contact must be appointed by the principal and are responsible for identifying homeless and unaccompanied youth and connecting them with the school district's homeless student liaison. The school district homeless student liaison is responsible for training building points of contact.

Housing Assistance. Subject to the funds appropriated for this specific purpose, Commerce 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 by promoting housing stability.

Up to 15 grants of up to \$500,000 may be awarded each school year 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, rental assistance, transportation assistance, emergency shelter, and housing stability case management. All beneficiaries of grant funds must be unaccompanied youth or from very low-income households, which is defined as an unaccompanied youth, 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 must collect specified data and report it to the Legislature along with related policy recommendations. Data on all program participants must be entered into the Washington Homeless Client Management Information System. OSPI must monitor the programs, including specified components, at least once every two years beginning in the 2016-17 school year.

If specific funding for this grant program is not provided in the Omnibus Appropriations Act, the provisions addressing the program are null and void.

Report. The list of data on homeless students on which OSPI must report is expanded to add the number of identified homeless students of color. The number of identified unaccompanied homeless students must be included for each district and the state under "student demographics" on the Washington State Report Card website.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: Testimony From 2015 Regular Session. PRO: 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.

Testimony From 2016 Regular Session. PRO: The homeless student population has increased. Homeless students will not succeed and graduate from high school unless support and services are provided, which include more counselors and housing assistance. This bill would provide more liaisons and more hours for liaisons. It is difficult for part-time liaisons

to juggle multiple schools. School districts are spending a lot of money on transportation costs for homeless students. More money could be spent on housing. When students have stable housing, they can focus on school, not where they will stay that night and where they will get their next meal. When students move between schools, their lives are disrupted and they often fall behind. It is unfair that homeless students do not have the same opportunities as students who live in homes. It is important to think about the bigger picture and McCleary funding when thinking about different proposals. The null and void clause should be applied to the entire bill.

Persons Testifying: Persons Testifying From 2015 Regular Session. 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 Testifying From 2016 Regular Session. PRO: Representative Fey, Prime Sponsor; Representative Stambaugh; Joaquin Herrera, Jack Karmen, Kyla Gustave Schelling, Jamal Williams, Denny International Middle School; Michael Wilson, Washington State School Directors' Association; Dan Grimm, Superintendent of Public Instruction; Brandy Sincyr, Columbia Legal Services; Lori Cavender, Ryan's House.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.