

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5315

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As of March 4, 2019

**Title:** An act relating to increasing student support staff in the prototypical school funding model.

**Brief Description:** Increasing student support staff in the prototypical school funding model.

**Sponsors:** Senators Wellman, Dhingra, Hasegawa, Saldaña and Van De Wege; by request of Office of Financial Management.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Early Learning & K-12 Education: 1/30/19, 2/20/19 [DPS-WM, DNP, w/oRec].

**Ways & Means:** 2/28/19.

**Brief Summary of First Substitute Bill**

- Increases staffing ratios for school nurses, social workers, psychologists, and guidance counselors in elementary and middle schools.
- Increases staffing ratios for school nurses, social workers, and psychologists in high schools.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

**Majority Report:** That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5315 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Wellman, Chair; Wilson, C., Vice Chair; Hunt, McCoy, Mullet, Pedersen and Salomon.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass.

Signed by Senator Holy.

**Minority Report:** That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senators Hawkins, Ranking Member; Padden and Wagoner.

**Staff:** Alex Fairfortune (786-7416)

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*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.*

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## SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

**Staff:** Jeffrey Naas (786-7708)

**Background:** Prototypical School Funding Model. The state's public school funding model allocates funding to school districts based on assumed levels of staff and other resources necessary to support a prototypical school serving an assumed number of students at defined elementary, middle, and high schools levels. The use of prototypical schools is intended to illustrate the level of resources needed to operate a school of a particular size using commonly understood terms such as class size, hours of instruction, and specified staff positions.

The structure of the formula, which appears in statute, provides allocations for classroom teachers at an assumed class size, plus other building-level staff such as principals, teacher-librarians, counselors, and office support. Based on these staffing ratios, the state uses salary assumptions for each of the different staff types to generate state funding allocations. The funding provided to school districts through the prototypical school formulas is for allocation purposes only, and districts have discretion over how the money is spent, subject to some limits.

Enhanced Staffing Ratios. The voters approved Initiative 1351 at the 2014 general election. The initiative required the state to enhance staffing ratios, including those of school nurses, social workers, psychologists, and guidance counselors. EHB 2242, passed in 2017, repealing the staffing ratios of Initiative 1351, but placed enriched staffing ratios in a separate chapter. If the Legislature specifically funds and references the enriched staffing, then the enriched staffing becomes basic education.

**Summary of Bill (First Substitute):** Beginning in the 2019-21 biennium, staffing ratios within the prototypical school model must be increased for school nurses, social workers, psychologists, and guidance counselors in elementary and middle schools, and school nurses, social workers, and psychologists in high schools. These increases must be phased in over the course of three biennium, starting with school districts having the highest percentage of students eligible for free and reduced-price meals (FRPMs) in the prior school year, as follows:

- 2019-21 biennium—school districts with more than 50 percent of students eligible for FRPMs;
- 2021-23 biennium—school districts with more than 35 percent of students eligible for FRPMs; and
- 2023-25 biennium—all school districts.

Funding allocations for increased staffing ratios may only be provided in proportion to a school district's demonstrated actual increased staffing or existing staffing for school nurses, social workers, psychologists, and guidance counselors.

The identical staffing ratios provided under EHB 2242 for school nurses, social workers, psychologists, and guidance counselors at the elementary and middle school level, and school nurses, social workers, and psychologists at the high school level are removed or reduced.

**EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION COMMITTEE (First Substitute):**

- Phases in increased staffing ratios for high school nurses, social workers, and psychologists in the prototypical model, beginning in the 2019-2021.
- Adds a cross reference which provides that school districts only receive increased allocations to the extent they demonstrate increased or existing staffing ratios at the increased level.

**Appropriation:** The bill contains a section or sections to limit implementation to the availability of amounts appropriated for that specific purpose.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members:** No.

**Effective Date:** The bill contains several effective dates. Please refer to the bill.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Original Bill (Early Learning & K-12 Education):** *The committee recommended a different version of the bill than what was heard.* PRO: This improves school safety and takes critical steps to address a wrap around system, which is essential to academic success and social and emotional wellbeing. Typically the Washington Education Association does not support categorical funding for staff but the state is past crisis mode. Parents and educators are all concerned with these issues. There needs to be more adults in schools to look out for students, and at least one adult in each school who knows each student. This provides school districts with the flexibility to add staff that they most need, and the funding is provided in the Governor's budget. The phase in model prioritizes schools that need this first. This also makes progress towards the national model ratios.

The timeline should be accelerated because the need is urgent and staff are spread thin. As drafted this only equates to 15-20 more minutes for counselors each week. The bill should also increase ratios for high schools, not just elementary and middle schools. The language needs to be expanded and clarified so schools can provide support even if they can not add full time staff, as rural schools have a hard time attracting and retaining staff but could contract for services.

**Persons Testifying (Early Learning & K-12 Education):** PRO: Senator Lisa Wellman, Prime Sponsor; Mona Johnson, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; Bob Cooper, Washington Chapter National Association of Social Workers; Lucinda Young, Washington Education Association; Maddy Thompson, Senior Policy Advisor, Office of the Governor; Krystina Cummins, citizen; Kaaren Heikes, Director of Policy & Partnerships, Washington State Board of Education; Jessica Vavrus, Washington State School Directors' Association; Amy Brackenbury, Washington School Counselors Association and School Nurses Organization of Washington; Julia Warth, League of Education Voters; Elizabeth Nelson, Washington Association of School Social Workers; Robin Zaback, Washington State PTA; Dave Powell, Stand for Children.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Early Learning & K-12 Education):** No one.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Ways & Means):** PRO: We recognize that non-teaching staff such as nurses, counselors, social workers, and psychologists are critical to supporting social emotional learning and foundational to the economic and academic success of all students. We would ask as you are moving this forward to consider especially in our small and remote school districts to try to round the numbers up to a full-time position as it is difficult to get half-time educational staff associates in our rural and remote districts. We need many more social workers into the system and we need to move upstream in catching problems in treating mental health issues and once we do that we will avoid crises down the road. Research has shown that when school nurses intervene they can decrease the rate of absenteeism and early dismissal of student health due to health concerns. Thirty four percent of my student body are in need of intervention and 17 percent of them are not getting it because we do not have enough staff and it hits hard because, as a psychologist, I am not allowed to even work with those kids unless they qualify for special education.

My daughter has diabetes and she is now doing her own injections, but if she was not doing that the nurse would be coming in from the other school that she attends 20 minutes away to come check my daughter's blood. We have talked a lot about the need to intervene at early ages in order to prevent problems down the road with kids and we think one of the best ways to do that is by the foundational student supports that you are proposing to fund with this legislation and I would encourage you to support. Many children with even minor chronic health conditions are forced to switch schools during their most formative years of development leaving behind friends, teachers and mentors because they can not count on a school that has a school nurse. My niece died of an acute asthma or anaphylactic attack when she was ten years old. I am here today to ask you to honor the life of my precious niece by funding a nurse in every school.

**Persons Testifying (Ways & Means):** PRO: Lucinda Young, Washington Education Association; Michelle Rylands, Washington State PTA; Bob Cooper, National Association of Social Workers—Washington Chapter; Tessa McIlrath, Washington State Nurses Association; Ashley Gonzalez, School Nurses Association of Washington; Amy Brackenbury, Washington School Counselors Association; Brian Marcus, Seattle Children's Hospital; Carrie Suchy, Washington State Association of School Psychologists; Tracey Grant, citizen.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Ways & Means):** No one.