

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5736

As of March 1, 2019

Title: An act relating to the funding allocation for special education programs.

Brief Description: Concerning the funding allocation for special education programs.

Sponsors: Senators Wellman, Wilson, C., Conway and Kuderer.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Ways & Means: 2/20/19.

<p style="text-align: center;">Brief Summary of Bill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Increases the special education excess cost multiplier from 0.9609 to 0.98.

- Increases the special education excess cost multiplier from 0.9609 to 0.98.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Staff: Jeffrey Naas (786-7708)

Background: Special Education Excess Cost Multiplier. The state allocates funding for a program of special education for students with disabilities. Special education is funded on an excess cost formula for up to 13.5 percent of a district's students. This formula multiplies the district's base allocation for students enrolled in special education by an excess cost multiplier of 0.9609.

Summary of Bill: The special education excess cost multiplier is increased from 0.9609 to 0.98.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

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

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.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: We support completely closing the special education funding gap. If there needs to be a phase-in, we favor starting with schools with the highest percentage of students with special needs. We support the intent of this bill to provide an increase in the excess cost special education funding formula. School districts are expending local levy money to fill the funding gap: Evergreen public schools in Vancouver is expending \$9.5 million; Vancouver Public Schools is expending \$5 million; and Spokane is expending \$7.1 million. While we support the bill, we think that it is simply not enough money. We support elimination of the cap, further increase in special education funding for professional development, and language access so that immigrant refugee communities can communicate with schools effectively. The 13.5 percent cap is particularly a challenge for small local education agencies, such as rural districts, where the enrollment of one or two additional students with disabilities can put them over that 13.5 percent cap and mean that they do not get the funding for those additional students. We support increasing the funding level up to the 0.98 and to the degree that you can go higher, that certainly would be helpful.

OTHER: While we support the additional funding, the 0.98 multiplier would only provide a small fraction of the documented underfunding of at least \$300 million. As long as the safety net proposal goes forward in tandem with this and there is significant focus by the Legislature on and shifting the safety net that would move us to support from other. Without accelerated investments and increasing the multiplier, districts across the state will continue to rely on local enrichment levies to deliver required legal special education services. The multiplier is simply too low. We know under our current funding system our students with disabilities are being left behind. A substantial investment in special education is needed to ensure every child with a disability has an opportunity to live a full, meaningful, and productive life.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Lisa Wellman, Prime Sponsor; Michelle Nims, Washington State PTA; Joy Sebe, Open Doors for Multicultural Families; Lorrell Noahr, Washington Education Association; Melissa Gombosky, Spokane, Evergreen and Vancouver Public Schools; Julia Warth, League of Education Voters; Charlie Brown, Tacoma, Federal Way, Bethel, Franklin Pierce School Districts.

OTHER: Dave Mastin, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction; Dan Steele, Washington Association of School Administrators and Washington Association of School Business Officials; Jessica Vavrus, Washington State School Directors' Association; JoLynn Berge, Assistant Superintendent Business and Finance, Seattle Public Schools; Kate Davis, CFO, Highline Public Schools.

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