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**SENATE BILL 5187**

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**State of Washington 69th Legislature 2025 Regular Session**

**By** Senators Wellman, Dhingra, Conway, Shewmake, Bateman, Salomon, Riccelli, Hasegawa, Saldaña, Cortes, Frame, Krishnadasan, Nobles, Valdez, and C. Wilson

AN ACT Relating to providing adequate and predictable student transportation; amending RCW 28A.160.170; and adding new sections to chapter 28A.160 RCW.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 28A.160 RCW to read as follows:

(1) The legislature recognizes that many school districts do not receive adequate funding for student transportation under the current student transportation allocation reporting system formula. The legislature further finds that the formula does not provide sufficient funding to address the needs of special student populations, including students receiving special education services, students experiencing homelessness, students in foster care, and students attending skill centers. Furthermore, the formula does not address the unique transportation challenges faced by rural and high population density urban districts. Therefore, the legislature intends to direct the office of the superintendent of public instruction to gather and disaggregate student transportation data and develop a comprehensive funding model that is inclusive of the diverse needs of students and school districts.

(2) The legislature also recognizes the increased costs of transporting students experiencing homelessness due to the heavy reliance on individualized transport systems to get these students to and from school. To address this, the legislature intends to establish a flat rate funding model that allocates per-pupil funding for qualifying students.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 28A.160 RCW to read as follows:

(1) By June 1, 2028, the office of the superintendent of public instruction must provide an analysis of school district transportation costs and allocations following the 2026-27 school year to the education and fiscal committees of the legislature. This analysis must include the mileage, ridership, and costs for each district, disaggregated by the following student demographic categories: (a) Students requiring special transportation services to access special education services that are documented in a properly formed and approved individualized education program; (b) students requiring special transportation due to requirements of the McKinney Vento homeless assistance act or other federal program; (c) students requiring special transportation due to a foster care placement out of their regular school district boundary; (d) students attending skill centers; and (e) all other students transported to and from school.

(2)(a) The office of the superintendent of public instruction must use the analysis conducted in subsection (1) of this section to develop a transparent, predictable, and comprehensive student transportation funding model that addresses the diverse needs of students and the unique characteristics of school districts.

(b) The new funding model must be inclusive of student transportation services for the following demographic groups: (i) Students requiring special transportation services to access special education services that are documented in a properly formed and approved individualized education program; (ii) students requiring special transportation due to requirements of the McKinney Vento homeless assistance act or other federal program; (iii) students requiring special transportation due to a foster care placement out of their regular school district boundary; and (iv) students attending skill centers.

(c) The new funding model must include mechanisms to address the unique transportation challenges faced by high population density urban school districts and rural, geographically large districts that have a relatively low number of schools in proportion to the geographic size of the school district.

(d) This section is not intended to limit the factors, variables, demographic groups, or district characteristics that may be addressed by the office of the superintendent of public instruction when developing a new student transportation funding model.

**Sec.**  RCW 28A.160.170 and 2021 c 234 s 3 are each amended to read as follows:

Each district shall submit three times each year to the superintendent of public instruction during October, February, and May of each year a report containing the following:

(1)(a) The number of eligible students transported to and from school as provided for in RCW 28A.160.150, along with identification of stop locations and school locations((~~, and~~));

(b) ((~~the~~)) The number of miles driven for pupil transportation services as authorized in RCW 28A.160.150 the previous school year; and

(c) The number of students requiring special transportation due to requirements of the McKinney Vento homeless assistance act.

(2) Other operational data and descriptions as required by the superintendent to determine allocation requirements for each district. The superintendent shall require that districts separate the costs of operating the program for the transportation of eligible students to and from school as defined by RCW 28A.160.160(3), non-to-and-from-school pupil transportation costs, and costs to provide expanded services under RCW 28A.160.185(1) in the annual financial statement. The cost, quantity, and type of all fuel purchased by school districts for use in to-and-from-school transportation shall be included in the annual financial statement.

Each district shall submit the information required in this section on a timely basis as a condition of the continuing receipt of school transportation moneys.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 28A.160 RCW to read as follows:

(1) In addition to the pupil transportation allocations provided under this chapter, the superintendent of public instruction shall provide additional funds to support the alternative transportation costs associated with ensuring students experiencing homelessness are transported to and from school.

(2) Funds allocated to school districts under this section must be equal to $400 for each student that requires special transportation due to the requirements of the McKinney Vento homeless assistance act, as reported under RCW 28A.160.170, and may only be used to address transportation costs associated with such students.

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