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**HOUSE BILL 1466**

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**State of Washington 67th Legislature 2021 Regular Session**

**By** Representatives Rule, Ryu, J. Johnson, Lekanoff, Sutherland, Berg, Peterson, Bergquist, Taylor, Dent, Ramel, Pollet, Davis, Eslick, Hackney, Bronoske, and Riccelli

AN ACT Relating to promoting access to outdoor education; adding a new section to chapter 28A.630 RCW; creating a new section; and providing an expiration date.

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

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) The legislature finds that outdoor education has many benefits for students, for example promoting creativity and problem solving, developing social skills, improving classroom engagement, and increasing physical activity. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many students have transitioned to distance learning; however, outdoor play and classmate interaction remain important for students and can be achieved using outdoor education. Outdoor environments have low rates of transmission of the virus that causes COVID-19, so students and teachers can safely come together for in-person classes.

(2) Therefore, the legislature intends to establish a pilot project to provide assistance to schools to provide access to outdoor education, bring students and teachers together for in-person classes, and to further investigate the benefits of outdoor, nature-based classrooms for Washington's children and families.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 28A.630 RCW to read as follows:

(1) The office of the superintendent of public instruction shall establish a pilot project for outdoor, nature-based education programs in public schools. The pilot project must begin in the 2021-22 school year and conclude at the end of the 2024-25 school year.

(2) The office of the superintendent of public instruction must develop an application for the pilot project. Applications must include an implementation plan.

(3) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, the office of the superintendent of public instruction must award grants to up to 15 schools selected for participation in the pilot project. When selecting pilot project locations, the office of the superintendent of public instruction shall aim to select a mix of rural, urban, and suburban locations across the state and must give priority to schools with a high percentage of students eligible for the free and reduced-price meals program.

(4) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, the office of the superintendent of public instruction may convene an advisory group of outdoor, nature-based education practitioners to inform and support implementation of the pilot project.

(5) By November 30, 2024, and in compliance with RCW 43.01.036, the office of the superintendent of public instruction shall provide a report on findings from the pilot project, including recommendations for modifying or expanding the availability of outdoor, nature-based education programs, to the governor and the appropriate committees of the legislature.

(6) This section expires July 1, 2025.

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