

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 6388

As Passed House - Amended:

February 27, 2018

Title: An act relating to paraeducators.

Brief Description: Concerning paraeducators.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Early Learning & K-12 Education (originally sponsored by Senators Mullet and Rivers).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/20/18, 2/22/18 [DPA].

Floor Activity:

Passed House - Amended: 2/27/18, 98-0.

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill (As Amended by House)

- Delays the implementation of the minimum employment requirements for paraeducators and the provision of the fundamental course of study to paraeducators.
- Provides that paraeducators are only required to take, and districts are only required to provide, the fundamental course of study and the general courses on the state paraeducator standards of practice in school years for which state funding is appropriated specifically for this purpose and only for the number of days that are funded by the appropriation.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 18 members: Representatives Santos, Chair; Dolan, Vice Chair; Stonier, Vice Chair; Harris, Ranking Minority Member; Muri, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bergquist, Caldier, Hargrove, Johnson, Kilduff, Lovick, McCaslin, Ortiz-Self, Senn, Slatter, Steele, Stokesbary and Valdez.

Staff: Megan Wargacki (786-7194).

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.

Background:

A paraeducator means a classified school district employee who works under the supervision of a certificated or licensed staff member to support and assist in providing instructional services to students and their families. Paraeducators are not considered certificated instructional staff.

Minimum Employment Requirements.

Effective September 1, 2018, all paraeducators must meet the following minimum employment requirements. Paraeducators must:

1. be at least 18 years of age and hold a high school diploma or its equivalent; and
2. have received a passing grade on the paraeducator assessment; hold an Associate of Arts degree; have met minimum higher education credit requirements; or have completed a registered apprenticeship program.

Until September 1, 2018, only paraeducators who work in federal Title I, part A programs, which provide financial assistance to schools and districts with high numbers of children from low-income families, are required to meet minimum employment standards.

Fundamental Course of Study.

Subject to the appropriation of specific funds, beginning September 1, 2019, school districts must provide a four-day fundamental course of study on the state standards of practice to paraeducators who have not completed the course. Districts must use best efforts to provide the course before paraeducators begin to work with students and their families. At a minimum, districts must provide the course by the following deadlines based on hire date:

- for paraeducators hired on or before September 1, by September 30 of that year, regardless of the size of the district; and
- for paraeducators hired after September 1: for districts with 10,000 or more students, within four months of the date of hire; and for districts with fewer than 10,000 students, no later than September 1 of the following year.

General Paraeducator Certificate and Courses.

Paraeducators may become eligible for a general paraeducator certificate by completing the four-day fundamental course of study and an additional 10 days of general courses on the state paraeducator standards of practice. Paraeducators are not required to meet the general paraeducator certificate requirements unless amounts are appropriated for school districts to provide the courses.

Subject Matter and Advanced Paraeducator Certificates.

The Paraeducator Board must adopt rules for paraeducator subject matter certificates in English language learner and special education, and an advanced paraeducator certificate. By September 1, 2018, the Paraeducator Board must approve, and develop if necessary, courses required to meet the paraeducator certificate requirements, where the courses are offered in a variety of means that will limit costs and improve access.

Summary of Amended Bill:

Minimum Employment Requirements.

Rather than requiring all paraeducators to meet minimum employment requirements by September 1, 2018, the following deadlines must be met:

- a person working as a paraeducator for a school district before or during the 2017-18 school year must meet the minimum employment requirements by the date of hire for the 2019-20 school year or any subsequent school year; and
- a person who has not previously worked as a paraeducator for a school district must meet the minimum employment requirements by the date of hire for the 2018-19 school year or any subsequent school year.

By October 1, 2018, a school district that does not receive funding under Title I must report to the Paraeducator Board with the following information about paraeducators hired by the school district for the 2018-19 school year, as of September 1, 2018: the total number of paraeducators; and the number who meet the minimum employment requirements.

Paraeducator Courses.

The deadlines for school districts to provide the fundamental course of study to paraeducators is delayed as follows: for paraeducators hired for the 2018-19 school year, school districts must provide the fundamental course of study by September 1, 2020; and for paraeducators not hired for the 2018-19 school year, but hired for the 2019-20 school year, school districts must provide the fundamental course of study by September 1, 2021. For paraeducators hired subsequent to the 2019-20 school year, school districts must provide the fundamental course of study by the deadlines based on hire date.

Paraeducators are only required to take, and districts are only required to provide, the fundamental course of study and the general courses on the state paraeducator standards of practice in school years for which state funding is appropriated specifically for this purpose and only for the number of days that are funded by the appropriation.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Amended Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) The bill gives paraeducators an extra year to meet requirements that were enacted last year. It also gives paraeducators an additional route to become teachers. It is good to give districts more time to implement the minimum paraeducator employment requirements and the fundamental course of study for paraeducators.

This version of the bill does not include the \$500,000 in fiscal years 2019 and 2020 that could be allocated for the oversight and procurement of professional development for paraeducator certificates and some revisions that need to be done on the modules for the fundamental course of study. The funds should go to the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction because that aligns with the work currently being done to develop modules for teachers and principals working with paraeducators.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Senator Mullet, prime sponsor; Cindy Rockholt, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; and Doug Nelson, Public School Employees and Service Employees International Union 1948.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.