

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5146

As of February 8, 2013

Title: An act relating to a competitive grant program for informal science, technology, engineering, and mathematics education.

Brief Description: Creating a competitive grant program for informal science, technology, engineering, and mathematics education.

Sponsors: Senators Frockt, Litzow, Mullet, Kohl-Welles, Ranker, Dammeier, Harper, Darneille, Shin, Tom, Rolfes and Kline.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 2/08/13.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Staff: Eric Wolf (786-7405)

Background: The Department of Commerce (Department) manages three statutory programs providing competitive state grants to non-profit organizations for local community capital projects. Each program defrays a portion of the capital costs of acquiring, constructing, or rehabilitating local facilities. The Building for the Arts program is targeted to arts-related facilities; the Building Communities Fund program focuses on non-residential community and social service centers; and the Youth Recreational Facilities program targets non-residential youth recreation facilities that include a supporting social service or educational component.

Each biennium, the Department solicits proposals for each program statewide. Applications are evaluated and ranked by the Department and expert advisory committees. The Department includes the ranked lists of qualified projects for each program in its capital budget request. The Governor may include funding for all or some of the projects in the proposed capital budget.

The Legislature has final approval of the lists and the funding appropriated to each program. Over the past two biennia, capital budget appropriations for the three programs have totaled \$63.8 million in state bonds: \$12.6 million for Building for the Arts, \$40.5 million for the Building Communities Fund, and \$10.7 million for Youth Recreational Facilities.

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.

Under the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), also known as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), states must establish standards for what all students should know in reading, mathematics, and science. Washington's standards are the Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs).

Summary of Bill: Grant Program. A grant program is created to assist nonprofit organizations to acquire, construct, or rehabilitate, science or technology centers, zoos, and aquarium facilities. The Department must: solicit project applications from nonprofit organizations and local governments statewide; evaluate and rank the applications according to objective criteria in consultation with an advisory committee; and submit a prioritized list of eligible recommended projects to the Governor and Legislature beginning with the Department's 2015-17 capital budget request. The Department may not sign contracts or obligate funds until the Legislature has approved a specific project list.

Funding. The total recommended state funding for the biennial project list is capped at \$10 million. The maximum amount of state grant assistance for an individual project is 20 percent of the estimated or actual total capital cost, or \$2 million, whichever is less. The balance of the project cost must be provided from non-state sources, including cash, in-kind contributions, and the value of real property acquired specifically for the project purpose. To be eligible for funding, a zoo or aquarium facility must be for an organization accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums. A science or technology center facility must be for an organization that meets the requirements to be a member of the Association of Science and Technology Centers. Qualifying organizations must also provide school programs that meet the state's EALRs. Local community support, the project's timeline, and existing assets that applicants may apply to the project, are among the criteria to be considered in the evaluation process.

Advisory Committee. The advisory committee established by the Department must include a university faculty member specializing in science education, representatives of the state science or technology industry, members of the Washington Tourism Alliance, and pre-K and K-12 educators. Additional provisions require the grantee to hold the capital improvements for an appropriate period of time, use the facilities for the express purpose of the grant, and repay the grant principal with interest if found to be in noncompliance with the contract.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: An important technical aspect of the bill is in regard to the institutions receiving the grant be accredited. Students get the opportunity to learn science and math first hand by interacting with biologists and other scientists in real life, as well as interacting with zoo and aquarium animals. This will expose students to possible future careers they had never considered, and allow them to explore the best paths to make their goals happen. Research shows that hands-on experience in a zoo, aquarium, or

science center makes a huge difference in whether a student chooses a career in science, technology, engineering, or mathematics. Zoos, aquariums, and science centers are especially effective at engaging children in the early learning years.

OTHER: Zoos, aquariums, and science centers are not schools, so asking them to apply the state EALRs is unrealistic and that language should be amended.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Gary Geddes, Point Defiance Zoo and Aquarium, NW Trek Wildlife Park; Tim Knue, WA Assn. for Career and Technical Education; David Schaefer, Woodland Park Zoo; Putter Burt, KidsQuest Children's Museum; David Foster, Pacific Science Center, Seattle Aquarium Society.

OTHER: David Foster, Pacific Science Center, Seattle Aquarium Society.