

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5315

As of February 4, 2019

Title: An act relating to increasing student support staff in the prototypical school funding model.

Brief Description: Increasing student support staff in the prototypical school funding model.

Sponsors: Senators Wellman, Dhingra, Hasegawa, Saldaña and Van De Wege; by request of Office of Financial Management.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 1/30/19.

<p style="text-align: center;">Brief Summary of Bill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Increases staffing ratios for school nurses, social workers, psychologists, and guidance counselors in elementary and middle schools.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Staff: Alex Fairfortune (786-7416)

Background: Prototypical School Funding Model. The state's public school funding model allocates funding to school districts based on assumed levels of staff and other resources necessary to support a prototypical school serving an assumed number of students at defined elementary, middle, and high schools levels. The use of prototypical schools is intended to illustrate the level of resources needed to operate a school of a particular size using commonly understood terms such as class size, hours of instruction, and specified staff positions.

The structure of the formula, which appears in statute, provides allocations for classroom teachers at an assumed class size, plus other building-level staff such as principals, teacher-librarians, counselors, and office support. Based on these staffing ratios, the state uses salary assumptions for each of the different staff types to generate state funding allocations. The funding provided to school districts through the prototypical school formulas is for allocation purposes only, and districts have discretion over how the money is spent, subject to some limits.

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.

Enhanced Staffing Ratios. The voters approved Initiative 1351 at the 2014 general election. The initiative required the state to enhance staffing ratios, including those of school nurses, social workers, psychologists, and guidance counselors. EHB 2242, passed in 2017, repealing the staffing ratios of Initiative 1351, but placed enriched staffing ratios in a separate chapter. If the Legislature specifically funds and references the enriched staffing, then the enriched staffing becomes basic education.

Summary of Bill: Beginning in the 2019-21 biennium, staffing ratios within the prototypical school model must be increased for school nurses, social workers, psychologists, and guidance counselors in elementary and middle schools. These increases must be phased in over the course of three biennium, starting with school districts having the highest percentage of students eligible for free and reduced-price meals (FRPMs) in the prior school year, as follows:

- 2019-21 biennium – school districts with more than 50 percent of students eligible for FRPMs;
- 2021-23 biennium – school districts with more than 35 percent of students eligible for FRPMs;
- 2023-25 biennium – all school districts.

Funding allocations for increased staffing ratios may only be provided in proportion to a school district's demonstrated actual increased staffing or existing staffing for school nurses, social workers, psychologists, and guidance counselors.

The identical staffing ratios provided under EHB 2242 for school nurses, social workers, psychologists, and guidance counselors at the elementary and middle school level are removed.

Appropriation: The bill contains a section or sections to limit implementation to the availability of amounts appropriated for that specific purpose.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Effective Date: The bill contains several effective dates. Please refer to the bill.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: This improves school safety and takes critical steps to address a wrap around system, which is essential to academic success and social and emotional wellbeing. Typically the Washington Education Association does not support categorical funding for staff but the state is past crisis mode. Parents and educators are all concerned with these issues. There needs to be more adults in schools to look out for students, and at least one adult in each school who knows each student. This provides school districts with the flexibility to add staff that they most need, and the funding is provided in the Governor's budget. The phase in model prioritizes schools that need this first. This also makes progress towards the national model ratios.

The timeline should be accelerated because the need is urgent and staff are spread thin. As drafted this only equates to 15-20 more minutes for counselors each week. The bill should also increase ratios for high schools, not just elementary and middle schools. The language needs to be expanded and clarified so schools can provide support even if they can not add full time staff, as rural schools have a hard time attracting and retaining staff but could contract for services.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Lisa Wellman, Prime Sponsor; Mona Johnson, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; Bob Cooper, Washington Chapter National Association of Social Workers; Lucinda Young, Washington Education Association; Maddy Thompson, Senior Policy Advisor, Office of the Governor; Krystina Cummins, citizen; Kaaren Heikes, Director of Policy & Partnerships, Washington State Board of Education; Jessica Vavrus, Washington State School Directors' Association; Amy Brackenbury, Washington School Counselors Association and School Nurses Organization of Washington; Julia Warth, League of Education Voters; Elizabeth Nelson, Washington Association of School Social Workers; Robin Zaback, Washington State PTA; Dave Powell, Stand for Children.

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