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**SUBSTITUTE HOUSE BILL 1277**

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**State of Washington 68th Legislature 2023 Regular Session**

**By** House Education (originally sponsored by Representatives Donaghy, Harris, Slatter, Kloba, Reeves, Reed, Ormsby, and Pollet; by request of Professional Educator Standards Board)

AN ACT Relating to improving the consistency and quality of the implementation of the fundamental course of study for paraeducators; amending RCW 28A.413.060; adding a new section to chapter 28A.413 RCW; and creating a new section.

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

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) The legislature acknowledges that it created the paraeducator board to adopt standards of practice and required school districts to provide to paraeducators a four-day fundamental course of study on the standards to paraeducators. The legislature finds that it required that at least one day of the fundamental course of study be provided in person due to the benefits of face-to-face instruction, including that instructors can confirm the participant's application of learning objectives.

(2) The legislature recognizes that some school districts experience barriers to providing the fundamental courses of study in person due to long commute times for paraeducators, dangerous weather events, irregular hiring dates in small school districts, and other extenuating circumstances.

(3) It is the intent of the legislature to ensure that all paraeducators in Washington receive high quality and consistent professional development through the fundamental course of study, with a significant majority of paraeducators being trained in person. It is also the intent of the legislature to provide individual exemptions from in-person requirements for paraeducators with extenuating circumstances.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 28A.413 RCW to read as follows:

(1) By July 1, 2024, the board must update rules on the implementation of the fundamental course of study under RCW 28A.413.060 to require that a significant majority of paraeducators are provided with the course in person. Under the rules, the board may grant an exemption from the in-person requirement of RCW 28A.413.060 for an individual paraeducator based on an application from a school district that describes the extenuating circumstances that prevent the paraeducator from being able to complete the in-person requirement. The criteria for individual exemptions may include a burdensome commute, dangerous weather events, being hired by a small school district at an irregular time of year, and other extenuating circumstances.

(2) By July 1, 2024, the board must publish guidance for school districts on how to provide the fundamental course of study under RCW 28A.413.060 to improve the consistency and quality of staff development.

**Sec.**  RCW 28A.413.060 and 2019 c 268 s 3 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) School districts must implement this section only in school years for which state funding is appropriated specifically for the purposes of this section and only for the number of days that are funded by the appropriation.

(2)(a) School districts must provide a four-day fundamental course of study on the state standards of practice, as defined by the board, to paraeducators who have not completed the course, either in the district or in another district within the state. ((~~At least one day of the fundamental course of study must be provided in person.~~))

(b) School districts must use best efforts to provide the fundamental course of study before the paraeducator begins to work with students and their families, and at a minimum by the following deadlines ((~~provided in subsection (3) of this section.~~

~~(3) Except as provided in (b) of this subsection, school districts must provide the fundamental course of study required in subsection (2) of this section by the deadlines provided in (a) of this subsection~~)):

((~~(a)~~))(i) For paraeducators hired on or before September 1st, the first two days of the fundamental course of study must be provided by September 30th of that year and the second two days of the fundamental course of study must be provided within six months of the date of hire, regardless of the size of the district; and

(ii) For paraeducators hired after September 1st:

(A) For districts with ((~~ten thousand~~)) 10,000 or more students, the first two days of the fundamental course of study must be provided within four months of the date of hire and the second two days of the fundamental course of study must be provided within six months of the date of hire or by September 1st of the following year, whichever is sooner; and

(B) For districts with fewer than ((~~ten thousand~~)) 10,000 students, no later than September 1st of the following year.

((~~(b)(i) For paraeducators hired for the 2018-19 school year, by September 1, 2020; and~~

~~(ii) For paraeducators not hired for the 2018-19 school year, but hired for the 2019-20 school year, by September 1, 2021.~~

~~(4)~~)) (c) At least two days of the four-day fundamental course of study must be provided in person to each paraeducator unless the school district is granted an individual exemption by the board under section 2 of this act.

(3) School districts may collaborate with other school districts or educational service districts to meet the requirements of this section.

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