

SENATE BILL REPORT

HB 1622

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Early Learning & K-12 Education, March 20, 2023

Title: An act relating to supporting the needs of students experiencing homelessness.

Brief Description: Supporting the needs of students experiencing homelessness.

Sponsors: Representatives Fey, Rude, Simmons, Schmidt, Cortes, Senn, Slatter, Alvarado, Ryu, Wylie, Bergquist, Paul, Gregerson, Morgan, Macri, Pollet, Doglio, Timmons and Leavitt.

Brief History: Passed House: 3/4/23, 96-0.

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 3/16/23, 3/20/23 [DPA].

Brief Summary of Amended Bill

- Modifies the requirements for two existing grant programs supporting students experiencing homelessness.
- Directs the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction and the Department of Commerce to collaborate on shared goals and outcomes for these grant programs and to submit a joint report every two years beginning in 2024.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Wellman, Chair; Nobles, Vice Chair; Wilson, C., Vice Chair; Hawkins, Ranking Member; Dozier, Hunt, McCune, Mullet and Pedersen.

Staff: Ailey Kato (786-7434)

Background: McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act. This federal law provides grant funding to support school districts that serve students experiencing

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homelessness. It defines "homeless children" as individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.

Under the act, school districts are required to designate a liaison to ensure homeless children and youth are identified and served. Under state law, each K to 12 public school must establish a building point of contact to help identify homeless and unaccompanied homeless youth and connect them with the school district's liaison.

Work Group to Address the Needs of Students Experiencing Homelessness. The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), in collaboration with the the Department of Children, Youth, and Families, the Office of Homeless Youth Prevention and Protection Programs, and the Washington Student Achievement Council, must convene a work group to address the needs of students in foster care, experiencing homelessness, or both.

The Office of Homeless Youth Prevention and Protection Programs within the Department of Commerce (Commerce) is responsible for coordinating a spectrum of ongoing and future funding, policy, and practice efforts related to homeless youth and improving the safety, health, and welfare of these youth.

The work group must submit annual reports with a final report due July 1, 2024.

Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction Grant Program. In 2016, OSPI created a competitive grant process to evaluate and award state-funded grants to school districts to increase the identification of students experiencing homelessness and the capacity of the districts to provide support.

Department of Commerce Grant Program. In 2016, Commerce began to administer a grant program that links students experiencing homelessness and their families with stable housing located in the student's school district. Commerce may contract and consult with a designated vendor to provide technical assistance and program evaluation, and assist with making grant awards.

Requirements for this grant program and OSPI grant program were modified in 2019. Both grant programs are subject to appropriations.

Summary of Amended Bill: Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction Grant Program. Requirements regarding this grant program are modified.

Two goals for the grant program are specified and aligned with Commerce's grant program:

- provide educational stability for students experiencing homelessness by promoting housing stability; and
- encourage the development of collaborative strategies between education and housing partners.

Examples of permitted student supports and activities are specified:

- direct academic supports, including tutoring and additional transportation costs;
- basic needs, including retail store cards, nutrition supports, and hygiene items;
- wraparound supports, including contracting with community-based providers, behavioral and physical health supports, and housing-related supports, such as bedding and short-term hotel or motel stays, that meet a student's emergent needs and allow the student to fully participate in school;
- employment supports for students and families; and
- out-of-school enrichment activities, such as an academic tutor provided at a shelter.

In addition to accessing federal and state funding, school districts are encouraged to use grant dollars to leverage community resources and strengthen relationships with community-based partners.

In addition to existing grant award criteria, greater weight for grant awards must be given to school districts that demonstrate a commitment to partner with organizations that focus on equitable housing and homeless strategies.

Department of Commerce Grant Program. Requirements regarding this grant program are modified.

If Commerce contracts with a designated vendor to assist with the grant awards, the designated vendor must also support collaboration between Commerce and OSPI.

Applications for the grant program must include a letter of support from the applicable school districts. Within 60 days of receiving a grant award a memorandum of understanding (MOU) must be established between the housing providers and school districts. If a MOU cannot be established by this time, the house provider and school district may work with Commerce on a case-by-case basis to provide a detailed accountability plan.

Gasoline assistance to students is added as an activity eligible for assistance under this grant program.

Joint Report. OSPI and Commerce must collaborate on shared goals and outcomes with these two grant programs. Beginning in 2024, and every two years thereafter, OSPI and Commerce must jointly produce a report.

EFFECT OF EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION COMMITTEE AMENDMENT(S):

- Changes some references to education partners to school districts.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on House Bill: *The committee recommended a different version of the bill than what was heard.* PRO: The number of students experiencing homelessness and housing instability is increasing. These successful grant programs provide support to students experiencing homelessness through the school and community partners, and they help keep students in their schools. These programs complement McKinney-Vento requirements. The modifications to these grant programs encourage collaboration between OSPI and Commerce and makes sure they are working on a common plan. It aligns program goals and reporting requirements, clarifies the flexibility of OSPI grant funding, and makes it easier for organization to apply for grants. A corresponding budget request to increase funding for these programs should also move forward.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Jake Fey, Prime Sponsor; Megan Veith, Building Changes; Morgan Valentine, Council for the Homeless; Charlie Brown, Pierce County Superintendents.

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