

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5565

AS REPORTED BY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, FEBRUARY 28, 1991

Brief Description: Extending programs for students with learning problems.

SPONSORS: Senators Erwin, Rinehart, Bailey, Murray, Talmadge, Metcalf, A. Smith, Pelz, Anderson, Craswell, Oke and von Reichbauer.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Bailey, Chairman; Erwin, Vice Chairman; Anderson, Metcalf, Murray, Oke, Pelz, Rinehart, A. Smith, and Talmadge.

Staff: Leslie Goldstein (786-7424)

Hearing Dates: February 27, 1991; February 28, 1991

BACKGROUND:

In 1989, the Legislature created a two-year Prevention of Learning Disabilities Pilot Program. The intent of the program is to encourage the school districts selected for the pilot project to find ways of better serving the needs of learning disabled students. The legislation allowed the school districts conducting a pilot project to receive a guaranteed level of funding for learning disabled students without requiring the school districts to assess and identify the students as learning disabled.

Except as provided in the pilot project legislation, the funding mechanism for learning disabled students is based on the assessment and identification of students as learning disabled. The assessment process has been criticized for being too expensive, too time consuming, and a misdirection of school resources.

Two of the school districts are currently receiving funds for the 1990-91 school year. The participating school districts are requesting that the pilot program be extended beyond the 1990-91 school year and expanded to include more school districts.

SUMMARY:

The pilot program is extended through the 1994-95 school year and can include up to ten school districts.

School districts will be reimbursed upon the number or the percentage, whichever is greater, of specific learning

disabled students served in special education during the school year prior to commencement of the pilot project or prior pilot projects, through the 1990-91 school year. Beginning in the 1991-92 school year, participating districts will be reimbursed based on 4 percent of the school district's total time equivalent student enrollment.

By December 1, 1991, the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) is required to report to the Legislature and the Governor on the effectiveness of the program and its recommendations on whether the program should be expanded to other districts.

SPI is required to create an implementation review board made up of one representative from each of the participating districts. The board will review all the rules adopted by SPI pertaining to this program and report to the Legislature and Governor before December 1, 1991, on ways to improve or reduce the paperwork necessary to conduct this program. SPI is given authority to create a new program code in the accounting manual for public school districts to track expenditures and revenues related to the program.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: requested February 21, 1991

TESTIMONY FOR:

This bill will help districts blend funds without losing dollars and without labeling kids. The preliminary results on the current pilot program are encouraging but the two-year time period was not long enough to effectively evaluate the program.

TESTIMONY AGAINST: None

TESTIFIED: Stephen Fink and Ken Hoover, Edmonds School District;
Bill Hulten, Olympia School District