
Capital Budget Committee

HB 1923

Brief Description: Concerning school construction assistance grants for small, rural school districts.

Sponsors: Representatives Blake, J. Walsh and Kirby.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Creates a school construction assistance grant program for school districts with student enrollments less than one thousand.
- Requires an advisory committee, appointed and staffed by the Superintendent of Public Instruction, to propose a list of prioritized grants by September 1st of even-numbered years.
- Establishes prioritization criteria and an evaluation process for the committee to review and rank grant applications.
- Establishes grant disbursement and reporting requirements for the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Hearing Date: 2/14/17

Staff: Christine Thomas (786-7142).

Background:

In the capital budget, the state provides financial assistance to school districts for constructing new school buildings or remodeling and replacing existing ones. State funding assistance is provided for permanent instructional space only, while land purchases and auxiliary facilities, such as stadia and district administrative space, must be funded entirely with local revenues. The School Construction Assistance Program (SCAP), administered by the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), is based on two principles: (1) state and local school districts share the responsibility for the provision of school facilities; and (2) there is an equalization of burden among school districts to provide school facilities regardless of the wealth of the districts.

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.

A school district must first secure local funding before it becomes eligible for state financial assistance. Local funds may include voter-approved capital levies and bonds, impact fees, mitigation payments, interest income from a school district's capital projects fund, or transfers from a school district's general fund with OSPI approval. Once the local share is secured, the state allocates funding to districts based on a set of space and cost standards adopted by the Legislature, and a statutory funding assistance percentage based on the relative wealth of the district.

More than 170 school districts of the 295 school districts in Washington have fewer than one thousand student enrollments. Of those school districts, 55 have not received state funding assistance for construction or modernization of schools through the SCAP since 1985.

Summary of Bill:

A school construction assistance grant program for modernization of schools at small, rural district is created. To be eligible, school districts must have enrollments of less than one thousand students and complete information in the Inventory and Condition of Schools (ICOS) data system administered by the OSPI. The Superintendent of Public Instruction must appoint an advisory committee comprised of members experienced in financing, managing, repairing, and improving school facilities in small, rural districts. The advisory committee must identify school projects with building deficiencies in small, rural school districts with limited financial capacity and greatest student achievement gaps. The OSPI provides technical assistance to the districts identified by the advisory committee to develop affordable and effective proposals to resolve the building deficiencies. The advisory committee evaluates final applications and submits a prioritized list to the OSPI and the Governor by the first of September of even-numbered years. The OSPI contracts with the school districts receiving the modernization grants and must specify reporting requirements including updating all pertinent information in the ICOS.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 7, 2017.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.