

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6117

As of February 4, 2020

Title: An act relating to appropriations for special education programs.

Brief Description: Concerning appropriations for special education programs.

Sponsors: Senators Wellman, Dhingra, Hunt, Kuderer, Pedersen, Saldaña and Wilson, C.; by request of Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 1/22/20.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Increases the multiplier for students enrolled in special education who are in the general education setting for 80 percent or more of the school day to 1.0251 rather than 1.0075, beginning in the 2020-21 school year.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Staff: Alex Fairfortune (786-7416)

Background: The state allocates funding for a program of special education for students with disabilities. Special education is funded on an excess cost formula for up to 13.5 percent of a district's students. This formula multiplies the district's base allocation for students enrolled in special education by an excess cost multiplier of 0.995.

Beginning in the 2020-21 school year, a new tiered multiplier will take effect. The multiplier will remain at 0.995 for students enrolled in special education who are in the general education setting for less than 80 percent of the school day. The multiplier will increase to 1.0075 for students enrolled in special education who are in the general education setting for 80 percent or more of the school day.

Summary of Bill: Beginning in the 2020-21 school year, the multiplier for students enrolled in special education who are in the general education setting for 80 percent or more of the school day is increased to 1.0251 rather than 1.0075.

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.

Appropriation: None.

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: PRO: The amount of special education funding that comes from levies is still a lot, but increasing the multiplier is a step in the right direction. Increasing the multiplier for inclusive practices is big picture, and will benefit all students. It is more expensive to have a student in the general education setting, but when they are there they are more likely to graduate. We also need to learn how to support students in an inclusive environment because when they graduate they will be in the general population.

OTHER: There is concern that taking these little steps will make the Legislature feel as though special education is fully funded, but that is not the case. School districts expend \$1.9 billion on special education services but only receive \$1.6 billion, leaving a \$300 million gap that must be filled with local levies. This bill provides \$12 million a year but does not fully address the larger gap. Another key component is to lift the 13.5 percent funded enrollment cap. This cap was put in place years ago based on a snapshot that is no longer accurate, and should be eliminated as it is disproportionately hitting small, rural districts that have less access to levy funds to supplement. Next year, with dyslexia screenings, all districts will see a significant increase in their special needs population.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Lisa Wellman, Prime Sponsor; Julia Warth, League of Education Voters; Marnie Maraldo, Issaquah School Board, Washington State School Directors' Association; Ramona Hattendorf, The Arc of King County; Charlotte Cassady, Attorneys for Educational Rights; Dave Mastin, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction.

OTHER: Lorrell Noahr, Washington Education Association; Kyle Rydell, Eastern Washington Quality Schools Coalition; Susan Cioe, Washington State PTA; Peggy Dolane, Seattle Special Education PTSA.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: PRO: Dan Steele, Washington Association of School Administrators, Washington Association of School Business Officials.