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**SENATE BILL 6082**

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**State of Washington 68th Legislature 2024 Regular Session**

**By** Senators Nobles, Wellman, Kuderer, Liias, Lovick, Mullet, Pedersen, Randall, Saldaña, Stanford, Valdez, and C. Wilson; by request of Superintendent of Public Instruction

AN ACT Relating to increasing compensation for Washington paraeducators; adding new sections to chapter 28A.400 RCW; and creating a new section.

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

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) The legislature finds that:

(a) Paraeducators play an essential role in Washington's public school system, often serving as the primary instructional support for our most vulnerable student populations;

(b) Recognizing the important role paraeducators play, the legislature passed House Bill No. 1115 in 2017 establishing common statewide standards for paraeducators increasing the training requirements and expectations of the profession;

(c) There is a need and a value for our state's paraeducators to receive specialized training in specific areas such as instruction for English language learners and special education;

(d) Paraeducators often represent more racial diversity in Washington's schools than the diversity in the state's certificated teaching population; and

(e) Paraeducator attrition rates from the state's public school workforce have increased dramatically over time; for example, the paraeducator attrition rate after the 2021-22 school year was 23 percent, which is over twice as high as the attrition rate after the 2008-09 school year of eight percent.

(2) Therefore, the legislature intends to increase state funding for paraeducator compensation, benefiting Washington's students statewide, while simultaneously incentivizing paraeducators to remain in the profession.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 28A.400 RCW to read as follows:

(1) Beginning in the 2024-25 school year, the state allocation for paraeducator salaries is increased to provide an additional statewide average of $7 per hour per full-time equivalent paraeducator hired by school districts as reported in the 2022-23 school year. The statewide allocation for paraeducator salaries must be adjusted by the same salary inflationary increases provided to certificated educators under RCW 28A.400.205 and for regional differences in the cost of hiring staff as specified in RCW 28A.150.410, including benefits as provided in section 506 of the 2023 omnibus operating appropriations act.

(2) Funding provided for paraeducator salaries under this section must be expended only for the support of paraeducator salaries.

(3) For school districts who receive additional funding under this section, a school district's average ratio of full-time equivalent paraeducators to full-time equivalent students may not be less than the school district's average ratio of full-time equivalent paraeducators to full-time equivalent student from the 2018-19 school year.

(4) In accordance with the criteria adopted by the office of the superintendent of public instruction under this section, the superintendent of public instruction may grant waivers to school districts from the provisions of subsection (3) of this section, on the basis that a school district is at risk of entering into binding conditions, has experienced double levy failure, or is found to be in significant financial distress as further defined by the office of the superintendent of public instruction.

(5) For purposes of this section the following definitions apply:

(a) "Paraeducator" has the same meaning as in RCW 28A.413.010.

(b) "Full-time equivalent paraeducator" means a paraeducator working on a school year contract averaging 1,274 hours base over 182 days.

(6) The superintendent of public instruction shall adopt rules to implement this section.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 28A.400 RCW to read as follows:

(1) Beginning in the 2026-27 school year, the hourly wage for paraeducators who complete the fundamental course of study, as provided in RCW 28A.413.060, must not be less than $22.69 per hour, to be adjusted for regional differences in the cost of hiring staff as specified in RCW 28A.150.410.

(2) Beginning in the 2027-28 school year, the hourly wage for paraeducators who hold a valid general paraeducator certificate, as provided in RCW 28A.413.070, must not be less than $29.12 per hour, to be adjusted for regional differences in the cost of hiring staff as specified in RCW 28A.150.410.

(3) Beginning in the 2028-29 school year, the hourly wage for paraeducators with a subject matter certificate under RCW 28A.413.080, an advanced paraeducator certificate under RCW 28A.413.090, or a certified behavior technician credential as outlined in WAC 246-805-310 must not be less than $35.56 per hour, to be adjusted for regional differences in the cost of hiring staff as specified in RCW 28A.150.410.

(4) Minimum salary requirements described in this section apply to all paraeducators regardless of full-time or part-time employment status.

(5) For purposes of this section, "paraeducator" has the same meaning as in RCW 28A.413.010.

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