

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SB 5019

As Reported by House Committee On:
Education

Title: An act relating to classified staff providing student and staff safety.

Brief Description: Concerning classified staff providing student and staff safety.

Sponsors: Senators Wellman, Braun, Dhingra, Hunt, Keiser, Randall, Saldaña, Trudeau, Valdez and Wilson, C..

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 3/9/23, 3/16/23 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Removes restrictions on the use of allocations for classified staff providing student and staff safety.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 8 members: Representatives Santos, Chair; Shavers, Vice Chair; Bergquist, Callan, Ortiz-Self, Pollet, Stonier and Timmons.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Rude, Ranking Minority Member; McEntire, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Eslick, Harris, McClintock, Sandlin and Steele.

Staff: Megan Wargacki (786-7194).

Background:

The prototypical school funding model allocates general apportionment funding to school

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districts based on assumed levels of staff and other resources necessary to support "prototypical" elementary, middle, and high schools. These prototypical schools are assumed to have the following full-time equivalent student enrollments: 400 students for elementary school; 432 students for middle school; and 600 students for high school.

Funding provided to school districts through the prototypical school funding model is for allocation purposes only and district have discretion over how the money is spent, subject to some limits.

For example, there are limits on the use of allocations for a category of staff called physical social, and emotional support (PSES) staff. "Physical, social, and emotional support staff" include classified staff providing student and staff safety, nurses, social workers, psychologists, counselors, parent involvement coordinators, and other school district employees and contractors who provide physical, social, and emotional support to students as defined by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI).

The rules of the OSPI add the following staff, among others, to the definition of PSES staff: occupational therapists, behavior therapists, health/related services staff, and pupil management and safety staff. The OSPI's personnel reporting manual states that "pupil management and safety" means bus aides, pupil security personnel, playground aides in assistance of students with disabilities, and lunchroom aides in assistance of students with disabilities.

Funding, up to the combined minimum allocations, for nurses, social workers, psychologists, counselors, classified staff providing student and staff safety, and parent involvement coordinators through the prototypical school funding model may be allocated only to the extent of and proportionate to a school district's demonstrated actual ratios of: full-time equivalent PSES staff to full-time equivalent students.

In addition, school districts must prioritize the funding allocated for PSES staff for PSES staff who hold a valid educational staff associate certificate appropriate for the staff's role.

Summary of Bill:

Classified staff providing student and staff safety are no longer included in the calculation of a school district's demonstrated ratio of full-time physical, social, and emotional support staff to full-time equivalent students for purposes of funding allocations. As a result, restrictions on the use of allocations for classified staff providing student and staff safety are removed.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill contains multiple effective dates. Please see the bill.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) To support student health, schools need more nurses, counselors, social workers, and psychologists. Last year legislation was enacted that increased the funding for these positions over time and required that funding to be spent on a category of school staff that supports the physical, social, and emotional health of students. The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) said the category includes school resource officers, playground monitors, and school lunchroom monitors.

The state has a mental health crisis. When children are emotionally and mentally well, they do better in school because they are able to learn. Students are accessing health staff more now than ever before. Having a registered nurse on site at schools helps save students' lives in emergency situations.

The Legislature intended to invest money to improve the social emotional learning of students. This bill is a clarifying fix to focus state funding on the category of staff that the Legislature intended to focus on: school counselors, social workers, psychologists, and nurses. Maximizing funding for this purpose will help ensure that all students are well cared for. This bill does not change the funding that goes to school districts; school districts can still hire security staff if they choose to.

(Opposed) This bill fixes a problem created last year. The safety of children should be paramount and the additional money should not be restricted to certain staff. Safety is an important piece of social and emotional wellbeing. If safety is looked at holistically, school resource officers and other safety staff should be included. This decision should be made at the local level.

The state has diverse regions and school districts have diverse needs. The ability of school districts to use these funds as they choose is important. Parents want to be able to provide input into how the money is spent. This bill would not allow school districts to decide what types of staff are best to provide students with physical and social safety.

(Other) Last year the Legislature made historic investments in school staffing levels. School districts were thrilled to receive the funding for additional staff and want to use the money in an effective manner. The Legislature required school districts to increase staffing in specified positions. This bill would no longer count classified safety staff in compliance with the law.

This bill will provide students with the social emotional learning supports that they desperately need. Students benefit from classified staff who provide social emotional

learning services.

Some school districts think that this bill would limit their ability to hire or contract with certain staff. Many nurses do not meet the school certification requirements and to hire these nurses, schools have to provide additional funding to be competitive.

Staff that provide supervision for the safety of students are important. There are classified staff who create relationships with students to support the safety of students and the mental health of struggling students. Only school resource officers should be deleted from the definition of staff compliance.

The policy enacted last year should be left to play out, so that school districts can show what they can do with the money. The OSPI is required to provide a report to the Legislature on implementation of compliance. The best course of action is to not make changes until that information is available.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Senator Lisa Wellman, prime sponsor; Liz Pray, School Nurse Organization of Washington; Julie Salvi, Washington Education Association; Melanie Smith, Committee for Children; Terique Scott, League of Education Voters; and Jeremy Arp, National Association of Social Workers.

(Opposed) Julie Barrett, Conservative Ladies of Washington; and Eric Pratt.

(Other) Wendy Williams-Gilbert, Washington State School Directors' Association; Lori Cloud, Tahoma School District; and Rick Chisa, Public School Employees of Washington.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.