

Fiscal Estimate Narratives

DPI 6/10/2021

LRB Number	21-1968/1	Introduction Number	SB-373	Estimate Type	Original
Description making school district and school financial information available to the public					

Assumptions Used in Arriving at Fiscal Estimate

This bill requires DPI to make detailed information related to financial data that DPI collects from school districts and county children with disabilities education boards (CCDEBs) available on a single web page, referred to as the financial information portal, in a format that allows the public to download, sort, search, and access the information at no cost. The requirement would begin in the 2023-24 school year, though the bill provides for a delay of one year if necessary.

The bill also requires DPI to include on the financial information portal similar financial information it collects from independent charter schools (ICS) to the extent that doing so is feasible without collecting any additional information from ICS solely for this purpose.

Under the bill, DPI must annually update the information in the portal and conduct a public information campaign about the availability of the financial information in the portal on DPI's Internet site.

The bill also creates a school district and school financial information transparency advisory committee to advise DPI on the creation and design of the financial information portal. Under the bill, the 11 members of the advisory committee must be appointed by no later than 60 days after the bill becomes law. By no later than April 15, 2023, the advisory committee must submit its advisory report on the financial information portal to DPI.

Under the bill, the advisory report must include recommendations on various topics, including the categories of information and the financial data for each required category of information that must be accessible on the financial information portal; whether DPI's existing hardware, software, data collection methods, training, maintenance, communications, data security, and installation specifications for reporting information are appropriate for the financial information portal; and, the resources that are necessary to implement and maintain the financial information portal, as recommended by the advisory committee.

By no later than 45 days after receiving the advisory report, DPI must respond to the advisory committee on whether DPI will implement each recommendation in the advisory report and if not, the reasons why. By the same deadline, DPI must also deliver the advisory report and its response to the advisory report to the Joint Committee on Finance (JCF), which triggers a 14-day JCF passive review process.

If no JCF members file an objection to DPI's plan within 14 working days, DPI implements the plan. But if an objection is filed, DPI may not implement any recommendation in the report until JCF approves DPI's plan. The bill requires DPI to implement the recommendations, as approved by JCF, by no later than one year after it is allowed to do so under the JCF review process, though the bill allows DPI to delay implementation if necessary, so that the portal would be publicly available during the 2024-25 school year.

The federal Every Student Succeeds Act (December 2015) introduced a new requirement for each local education agency (LEA) to report expenditures to their state education agency (SEA), which would in turn report that information to the U.S. Department of Education. Under this reporting requirement, expenditures are reported by school, by funding source (federal, state, or local funds) and on a per-pupil basis. DPI has developed an online collection tool that assists school districts and other Wisconsin LEAs with meeting the ESSA school level per-pupil expenditure reporting requirement, starting with 2018-19 data. The 2018-19 and 2019-20 is available in the WISEdash Public Portal.

Local Fiscal Impact: no direct fiscal impact

State Fiscal Impact: Increased costs, indeterminate

While development of the school-building level financial data reporting system is well under way, the requirement under the bill to make data collected through the system available on a single web page on DPI's

Internet site would require the department to construct an online data portal.

The precise costs of constructing the online portal, as specified in the bill, is not known; however, the annual cost of a single IT contractor working full time is approximately at least \$170,000 (e.g., to conduct the necessary work of development, programming, testing, and implementation of a portal that contains the requisite data and functionality specified in the bill).

Long-Range Fiscal Implications