



Legislative Fiscal Bureau

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February 12, 2020

TO: Members
Joint Committee on Finance

FROM: Bob Lang, Director

SUBJECT: Assembly Bill 801/Senate Bill 712: UW System Freshwater Collaborative

Assembly Bill 801 was introduced on January 24, 2020, and referred to the Assembly Committee on Colleges and Universities. On January 30, a public hearing was held. On February 6, in executive session the Committee recommended the bill for passage by a vote of 16-0.

Senate Bill 712 was introduced on January 24, 2020, and referred to the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Energy. On January 29, a public hearing was held. On February 5, in executive session the Committee recommended the bill for passage by a vote of 5-0.

SUMMARY OF BILL

AB 801/SB 712 would fund a freshwater collaborative among no more than six UW System institutions. The bill would provide \$2,000,000 GPR of annual funding for a freshwater collaborative beginning in 2020-21 in a new continuing appropriation under the UW System.

The bill would specify that the freshwater collaborative would have the following purposes: (a) studying the challenge of agriculture water management, including a focus on nutrient runoff and groundwater contamination, water withdrawal for irrigation, and the impact of water management practices on farm policy, including changes to farm efficiencies, production, and profit margins; and (b) studying the challenge of water quality and safety, including a focus on emerging contaminants, effective treatment techniques, nutrient contamination, well contamination, surface water contamination, lead contamination, legacy contamination, and safe drinking water compliance.

The bill would require the freshwater collaborative to do all of the following to accomplish the purposes described above: (a) devise new watercentric training programs focused on undergraduates; (b) provide an opportunity for students to participate in a work-study internship program in a state office that coordinates state water policy, and specify that the Board of Regents would determine the number of credits that students earn in the program; (c) provide scholarships

and student support to retain and attract new talent; (d) amplify marketing and recruiting relating to Wisconsin's role in freshwater science; (e) enhance workforce development programming including internships, research experiences, training institutes, and graduate research; and (f) recruit new faculty and staff for training programs, research, and innovation.

The bill would require the Board of Regents to establish metrics for determining the success of the freshwater collaborative in accomplishing its purposes. The bill would specify that no moneys could be expended from the appropriation created under the bill until the Board submits these metrics to the Joint Committee on Finance under a 14-day passive review process. Under this process, the Board could expend moneys if the Committee either: (a) does not notify the Board that it has scheduled a meeting within 14 working days after the submittal; or (b) the Committee meets and approves or modifies the metrics.

The bill would require the Board of Regents to appoint a committee to advise the Board on how to allocated the funding in the bill. The bill would require that the committee consist of the following: (a) the President of the System or his or her designee; (b) two members appointed by the Board who are nationally recognized objective experts who have shown expertise in the field of water science and who would have to be selected from a list of five individuals recommended by the President of the System or his or her designee; (c) two members appointed by the Senate Majority Leader, one of whom would have to represent the agricultural industry and the other would have to represent a private sector nonagricultural industry; (d) two members appointed by the Speaker of the Assembly, one of whom would have to represent the agricultural industry and the other would have to represent a private sector nonagricultural industry; and (e) two members appointed by the Governor, one of whom would have to represent a private sector nonagricultural industry and the other would represent a municipal water utility of a second-class city with a population of less than 150,000.

The bill would require that no later than December 31 of each odd-numbered year, the Board of Regents submit a report to the Joint Committee on Finance and to the chief clerk of each house for distribution to the standing committees having jurisdiction over matters regarding the UW System or natural resources. The bill would require that the report show the amount of the funding under the bill that is distributed to each institution and how those amounts compare to the amounts requested by each institution. The bill would specify that the report also describe all of the following: (a) how the funding is expended, including the number and types of positions created; (b) freshwater collaborative demographics, including the numbers of resident, nonresident, undergraduate, and graduate students who participate in the collaborative; and (c) the accomplishments of the freshwater collaborative, including the type and number of degrees conferred, research projects completed, and internships provided under the collaborative.

FISCAL EFFECT

The bill would create a continuing appropriation with \$2,000,000 GPR of annual funding beginning in 2020-21.

Prepared by: Dave Loppnow