



## Legislative Fiscal Bureau

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Joint Committee on Finance

Paper #540

### Teach for America (DPI -- Administrative and Other Funding)

[LFB 2013-15 Budget Summary: Page 393, #9]

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#### CURRENT LAW

No provision.

#### GOVERNOR

Provide \$500,000 GPR annually in a new, biennial appropriation to make payments to Teach for America, to recruit and prepare individuals to teach in low-income school districts.

#### DISCUSSION POINTS

1. Teach for America (TFA) is a non-profit organization founded in 1990 that recruits recent college graduates and other professionals to teach for at least two years in one of 43 low-income rural or urban regions across the country, including Milwaukee. The program is selective, recruiting high-achieving college graduates, most of whom would not otherwise consider teaching, to work in challenging, high-poverty public schools that might otherwise struggle to hire and retain quality teachers. Most TFA members move into non-teaching fields after two years, creating a network of alumni molded by the experience of teaching poor children, and intimately familiar with the challenges faced by public education systems. Proponents argue TFA helps to fill teaching positions in understaffed schools with motivated, academically strong young people working to improve educational equality for the poor. TFA also provides job experience and connections to alumni that may be helpful in gaining entry to other fields, school district leadership roles, or graduate programs.

2. Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) has been a 'district identified for improvement' under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act ('No Child Left Behind') since 2006, and MPS

began to restructure the district around school improvement during the 2007-08 school year. The district is currently responsible for implementing a district improvement plan monitored by the Department of Public Instruction (DPI), and will be required to continue district improvement efforts under the ESEA flexibility waiver granted by the Education Department in July, 2012. Milwaukee will need to hire large numbers of school staff before the start of the 2013-14 school year. A total of 719 staff members in MPS have submitted notice of their plans to retire or resign at the end of the 2012-13 school year, including 503 teachers.

3. The majority of TFA members have not graduated from traditional teacher education programs. They have typically majored in other fields and, therefore, have not studied pedagogy, the intellectual, social, and emotional development of children, curriculum design, differentiated instruction design, response to intervention, or other strategies and methods to address the needs of challenging learners. Because of the relatively short 2-year commitment, TFA members may not have the benefit of developing and improving their practice through years of experience, professional development, and continuing education. On the other hand, for some participants in Teach for America who do choose to make teaching their profession and gain more experience, the program recruits talented, high-achieving young people into the education profession.

4. A study for Mathematica Inc. compared TFA members to a comparison group of mostly novice, and largely non-certified teachers, all teaching in the same schools across six districts. Compared to this relatively underprepared group, overall TFA teachers' students showed gains similar to those of comparison teachers in reading, and were better in math, although overall scores remained low, around the 15<sup>th</sup> percentile. However, the positive impact was found only for TFA members who had obtained training and certification in their second and later years teaching. First-year TFA teachers did not positively affect scores in reading or mathematics. A separate Arizona study in five low-income school districts found that students of certified teachers outperformed students of uncertified teachers, including TFA teachers, in reading, mathematics, and language arts. The difference was measured to be four months on a grade equivalent scale in reading, three months in math, and three months in language arts.

5. Reports on TFA teacher retention have varied widely. *Education Week*, based on nationwide analysis, reported in 2011 that on average 60.5% of TFA teachers continue in public schools beyond their two-year commitment. However, an average 56% of TFA members leave their initial placements in low-income schools after two years. By their fifth year, approximately 15% of TFA teachers continue to teach in their initial low-income schools. Several studies of individual districts have found similar results. An analysis of New York City TFA teachers found that around 15% of TFA teachers remained in the district after four years. By contrast, while attrition amongst the general teacher population is also relatively high, around 63% of traditionally-trained teachers were still teaching in New York City after four years. In Houston, a similar analysis found 85% of TFA teachers left after three years, compared with 45% of non-TFA teachers.

6. High poverty schools are often most affected by high faculty turnover, causing the neediest pupils to be continually provided with the least experienced teachers. This trend could be exacerbated by TFA members, who appear more likely to leave the profession than traditionally

trained teachers. Pupils in those schools are often living in an environment of entrenched poverty and may benefit the most from consistency in the classroom and the expertise of veteran teachers.

7. On the other hand, proponents of TFA suggest that committed, energetic young people just beginning their careers would be more likely to put in the long hours outside the classroom that are necessary to help improve struggling schools. Compared with older, established teachers, who may be more likely to be raising their own families, recent college graduates would be able to devote a significant amount of time outside the classroom to providing students extra tutoring, volunteering for extracurricular clubs or activities, or calling parents regularly to actively engage them in their children's education.

8. The proposed state funding of \$500,000 annually would be used for training costs of TFA members. Staff from DOA indicates that training costs \$22,000 per teacher. Based on this estimate, the proposed funding would support training for 23 teachers each year. This could potentially represent a 25% increase over the 90 TFA teachers that the TFA indicates are currently placed in MPS schools, independent "2r" charter schools, and private schools in Milwaukee. TFA does not pay for their members' salaries; that is the responsibility of the school district hiring the teacher.

9. In 2011, TFA won a federal grant worth \$50 million, and successfully raised \$10 million in matching funds, to expand its teaching corps from 7,300 to 13,000 over the next five years. The organization's audited 2011 financial statement reports total revenue of \$270 million, with 30% coming from federal, state, and local governments, and expenses of \$219 million. Total net assets at the end of that year were \$351 million. Some would argue that TFA has sufficient resources for continued expansion without an infusion of state moneys.

10. The bill as written does not specify that TFA is required to use the \$500,000 annually for activities within the state of Wisconsin. However, the Administration has since requested that the bill be modified to add this requirement. To accomplish this, the Committee could choose to require that the \$500,000 be used to train TFA members for teaching assignments in Milwaukee, the only TFA site in the state.

11. If the goal of this funding is to increase teacher retention and quality in Milwaukee, it might be desirable to fund professional development to teachers and principals in low-performing "priority" Title I schools, as specified in the MPS corrective action plan. DPI could be required to administer the grant, in order to ensure that high quality, relevant professional development is provided, such as response to intervention and positive behavioral intervention and support strategies.

## **ALTERNATIVES**

1. Approve the Governor's recommendation.
2. Modify the Governor's recommendation to require that the \$500,000 GPR annual funding would be provided to Teach for America, to be used only within the state of Wisconsin.

3. Delete the Governor's recommendation and, instead, provide \$500,000 GPR annually to DPI, to be used to fund professional development in response to intervention and positive behavioral intervention and support strategies, for teachers working in schools identified as "priority" schools under the corrective action plan for Milwaukee Public Schools.

4. Delete provision.

<b>ALT 4</b>	<b>Change to Bill</b>
	Funding
GPR	- \$1,000,000

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