

During public hearings, the Commission heard testimony regarding the increasing mental health needs of pupils, and the cost to school districts of providing mental health services.

Three programs were created in the 2017-18 legislative session to address mental health needs. Under 2017 Acts 31 and 59, a mental health training program was created, totaling \$420,000 GPR annually. Under the program, DPI provides training on evidence-based strategies related to addressing mental health issues in schools to school district staff and instructional staff of independent charter schools. All of the following evidence-based strategies must be included in the training: (a) screening, brief intervention, and referral to treatment; (b) trauma sensitive schools training modules; and (c) youth mental health first aid.

Under Act 59, a community and school mental health collaboration grant program was created, under which grants are awarded to school boards and independent charter school operators for the purpose of collaborating with community mental health agencies to provide mental health services to pupils. The act provided \$3,250,000 GPR for the program in 2018-19. DPI indicates that in the first year of the program, grant proposals were received from 141 applicants, representing 182 school districts and charter schools, and totaling approximately \$8 million in requested funding. Grants ranging from \$11,000 to \$75,000 were awarded to 64 school districts and consortia consisting of more than one district or school.

Act 59 also created a school mental health aid program, which reimburses school districts, independent charter schools, and private schools participating in a private school choice program for increases in their general fund expenditures for school social workers. Districts or schools are eligible if they increase the amount spent to employ, hire, or retain social workers in the prior year compared to two years' prior, and may be reimbursed up to 50% of the total costs incurred. If funds remain in the appropriation, total general fund expenditures for social workers may be reimbursed. Act 59 provided \$3 million GPR beginning in 2018-19.

## **ALTERNATIVES**

1. Recommend providing \$5 million GPR annually in additional funding for community and school mental health collaboration grants, which would have fully funded grant applications received in 2018-19.

<b>ALT 1</b>	<b>2019-20</b>	<b>2020-21</b>
GPR	\$5,000,000	\$5,000,000

2. Recommend creating a new categorical aid for mental health services, with payments calculated in a manner similar to per-pupil aid under current law. Recommend restricting expenditures to those related to mental health. Funding payments equal to \$25 per pupil in the first year and \$50 per pupil in the second year would cost an estimated \$21.0 million GPR in 2019-20 and \$42.0 million GPR in 2020-21.

<b>ALT 2</b>	<b>2019-20</b>	<b>2020-21</b>
GPR	\$21,000,000	\$42,000,000