



Legislative Fiscal Bureau

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2017

Joint Committee on Finance

Paper #503

Transitions Readiness Investment Grant (Public Instruction -- Categorical Aids)

[LFB 2017-19 Budget Summary: Page 350, #9]

CURRENT LAW

No provision.

GOVERNOR

Provide \$1,500,000 GPR in 2018-19 for a new program for special education transition readiness investment grants.

DISCUSSION POINTS

1. The bill provides \$1.5 million GPR in a new appropriation for special education transition readiness investment grants. However, statutory language defining the program and authorizing DPI to disperse funds are not included in the bill. In the errata materials submitted to the Committee, the Department of Administration (DOA) requested that statutory language for the program be added to the bill.

2. Based on a proposal included in DPI's agency budget request, under the program, DPI would be required to award grants to school districts and independent charter schools to fund special education workforce transition support services, including pupil transportation to internship or work experiences, professional development for school personnel related to transition services, and additional staff to perform duties related to special education transitions such as coordinating work experiences with local organizations or businesses. Allowable expenses would be limited to transition support services, with grants required to equal between \$25,000 and \$100,000.

3. The goal of special education transition services is to help pupils and their families prepare for the pupil's life after completing high school, after which the pupil will no longer receive special education services. The federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires transition services to be included in individualized education programs (IEPs) for pupils who are age 16 or older, as well as for younger pupils in some cases. The IEP must address the pupil's transition from school to post-school activities, including post-secondary or vocational education, employment, adult services, or independent living, based on the pupil's individual needs.

4. The federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA) created additional responsibilities for school districts to support pupils with disabilities in their transition from school to the workforce or post-secondary education. WIOA requires school districts to collaborate with their state's division of vocational rehabilitation agency to offer services to pupils with disabilities, including work-based learning experiences, instruction in self-advocacy, and counseling related to job exploration, job training programs, and post-secondary education. Effective July of 2016, WIOA also limited placement at sheltered workshops, which are workplaces that employ individuals with disabilities at less than minimum wage. Pupils under age 24 can no longer be placed in sheltered workshops unless the pupil has first been provided with transition services, vocational rehabilitation, and career counseling. Additionally, WIOA restricts school districts from operating sheltered workshops or entering into contracts with sheltered workshops to employ pupils.

5. Historically, school districts have placed some special education pupils in jobs at sheltered workshops as a means of providing transition support to pupils prior to graduation. DPI indicates that as of Spring, 2016, 333 pupils were employed in 74 workshops located throughout the state. DPI's agency budget request indicates that school districts transitioning from using sheltered workshops to using community-based transition services could benefit from state support to expand their transition services.

6. Under another provision of the bill, \$2.6 million GPR in 2017-18 and \$3.5 million GPR in 2018-19 would be provided for the special education transitions incentive grant program. Under the program, school districts or independent "2r" charter schools are eligible to receive \$1,000 for each pupil who had an IEP in place when attending the district or school, and who meets one of the following criteria within one year of leaving high school: (a) enrolled in a higher education program; (b) is, or was, competitively employed; or (c) enrolled in another post-secondary education or training program. DPI estimates that school districts and independent charter schools will qualify for funding for approximately 1,650 graduates in 2016-17, and the prorated per pupil payment will equal approximately \$60. It is estimated that the funding provided under the bill would fully fund payments of \$1,000 per eligible pupil in 2017-18 and 2018-19.

7. Some could argue that two categorical aid programs related to special education transitions may be redundant. Both programs share a similar goal of improving transition services for pupils with disabilities. The existing program alone might be sufficient, particularly with the additional funding provided in the bill that will significantly increase the per pupil reimbursement amount. On the other hand, the existing program provides funds to school districts based on successful transitions that have already occurred, and therefore may primarily benefit school

districts that already have established transition services programs. The new grant program may be beneficial to provide additional funding for school districts that are working to improve their transition services.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Approve the Governor's recommendation to provide \$1,500,000 in 2018-19 for a new program for special education transition readiness investment grants, with a corrective amendment requested by DOA that would create statutory language defining the program. Under the program, DPI would be required to award grants of \$25,000 to \$100,000 to school districts and independent charter schools to fund special education workforce transition support services, including pupil transportation, professional development for school personnel, and employing adequate school personnel, and to develop rules to implement and administer the program.

ALT 1	Change to	
	Base	Bill
GPR	\$1,500,000	\$0

2. Delete provision.

ALT 2	Change to	
	Base	Bill
GPR	\$0	- \$1,500,000

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