

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE FISCAL NOTE

BILL NO. Senate Bill 629

PRINTER'S NO. 1835

AMOUNT

\$19,000

FUND

General

DATE INTRODUCED

March 16, 2009

PRIME SPONSOR

Senator Piccola

HISTORY OF BILL

Referred to EDUCATION, March 16, 2009

Reported as amended, June 23, 2009

First consideration, June 23, 2009

Re-referred to APPROPRIATIONS, July 1, 2009

Re-reported as amended, April 12, 2010

DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE OF BILL

Senate Bill 629 amends Article XI (Professional Employees) of the Public School Code to include social workers in the definition of "professional employee." It requires the school entities to hire individuals who hold a school social worker certificate issued by the Department of Education and requires the department develop a school social worker certificate no later than 60 days after the effective date of the act. School social workers currently employed in a school entity are grandfathered from the certification requirements. It also provides that school social workers may work under the supervision of a school superintendent, assistant superintendent, or other school employee as determined by the school entity. The term "school entity" is defined as a school district, intermediate unit, area vocational technical school or charter school.

The act is scheduled to take effect in 60 days.

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FISCAL NOTE

FISCAL IMPACT:

By including the term social worker in the definition of "professional employee," social workers employed in the Commonwealth's school entities would be guaranteed certain benefits provided to professional employees under the Public School Code. The benefits include enhanced protection from termination, paid sick leave, paid bereavement leave and sabbatical pay. While many school entities already provide benefits to social workers comparable to those provided to professional employees, some do not. School entities that do not provide comparable benefits would incur additional personnel expenses to meet the required benefit levels. Additionally, the Commonwealth's share of the employers' pension and social security costs would increase proportionate to the increase in personnel expenses.

At present, the Department of Education's most recent report on personnel shows that 194 employees are classified as social workers. Assuming 25 school social workers would see an increase in compensation due to mandated leave and sabbatical benefits, at an average cost of \$2,000 per employee, the adoption of this legislation would cost school entities approximately \$50,000 annually. Costs to the Commonwealth for pensions and social security would amount to approximately \$4,000 annually.

Also, the Department of Education estimates the development of school social worker certificate guidelines will cost approximately \$15,000.