

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

FISCAL NOTE

BILL NO. Senate Bill 1492

PRINTER'S NO. 2197

AMOUNT

No Fiscal Impact

FUND

General Fund

DATE INTRODUCED

April 12, 2012

PRIME SPONSOR

Senator Smucker

HISTORY OF BILL

Referred to EDUCATION, April 12, 2012

Reported as committed, May 1, 2012

First consideration, May 1, 2012

Second consideration, May 7, 2012

Re-referred to APPROPRIATIONS, May 7, 2012

Re-reported as amended, May 21, 2012

DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE OF BILL

Senate Bill 1492 establishes a new Article XV-G (Open Campus Initiatives) in the Public School Code to authorize open campus initiatives between school districts.

An open campus initiative is a cooperative agreement between school districts which allows students to participate in courses not currently available in their resident school district. Courses offered through an open campus initiative may be delivered outside of a regular school building in whole or in part using technology such as the Internet, video conferencing or other electronic means.

The bill specifies the time during which a student participates in open campus initiative courses shall be considered to be compliant with compulsory education requirements and that a student participating in open campus initiative courses must be engaged in at least 990 hours of instruction at the secondary level and 900 hours of instruction at the elementary level.

It requires the Department of Education provide technical assistance as needed to school districts establishing open campus initiatives.

It requires the cooperative agreement establishing an open campus initiative to outline the following policies: (1) grading; (2) credit; (3) promotion; (4) participation; (5) participation by students from nonparticipating school entities, including a fee schedule for determining tuition charges for those students; (6) use and distribution of tuition revenue; (7) discipline; (8) attribution of student data; (9) sharing of costs; and, (10) adding or removing courses.

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The bill provides that students attending a nonparticipating school entity may participate in an open campus initiative. It defines "nonparticipating school entity" as a school district, which is not party to the cooperative agreement between school districts, a charter school, cyber charter school, nonpublic school or home education program.

It also provides that for the purpose of Commonwealth reimbursements, a student participating in an open campus initiative shall be considered to be enrolled in the school district, charter school, cyber charter school, nonpublic school or home education program which determines the student's eligibility for participation in the open campus initiative.

Additionally, it requires the board of school directors in each school district participating in an open campus initiatives to adopt the cooperative agreement by a majority vote and requires all policies related to an open campus initiative to be posted on the participating school districts' publically accessible Internet websites.

The legislation will take effect in 60 days.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The enactment of Senate Bill 1492 will have no adverse impact on Commonwealth funds. Any technical assistance provided by the Department of Education to school districts establishing open campus initiatives should be routine and accomplished within its existing General Government Operations budget.

School districts that participate in open campus initiatives may realize savings to the extent they share curriculum resources and generate additional revenue though tuition fees charged for students participating in the open campus initiative who are enrolled in nonparticipating school entities.