

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE FISCAL NOTE

BILL NO. Senate Bill 144

PRINTER NO. 340

AMOUNT

\$300,000

FUND

General Fund

DATE INTRODUCED

March 4, 2019

PRIME SPONSOR

Senator Martin

DESCRIPTION

Senate Bill 144 establishes a new Article XV-J (Keystone Telepresence Education Grant Program) in the Public School Code to provide grants for telepresence equipment to intermediate units to enable homebound students to participate in daily school activities with the students' classmates and teachers in real-time.

The legislation provides for the Department of Education to develop guidelines for the purchase of telepresence equipment, services and training through the program, including approved manufacturers, and to adopt guidelines for the approval of grant applications.

The legislation requires the department to use up to \$300,000 annually of undistributed funds not expended, encumbered or committed from appropriations for grants and subsidies made to the department to award grants. It also provides that an intermediate unit may not receive an annual grant allocation that exceeds 10% of the funds available under the program.

The legislation requires a grant recipient to submit a report to the department detailing all expenditures related to the grant funding. It prohibits an intermediate unit from charging a school within the intermediate unit for use of the telepresence equipment when used to support the needs of a homebound student. Language is also included to provide that nothing in the legislation shall be construed to create an entitlement to telepresence equipment as a component of an individualized education plan for any student.

The bill is scheduled to take effect in 90 days.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The enactment of Senate Bill 144 will cost the Commonwealth \$300,000 annually to provide telepresence grants to intermediate units.

The administrative responsibilities delegated to the Department of Education to operate the grant program are routine to its operations and can be accomplished within its normal operating budget.