

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE FISCAL NOTE

BILL NO. Senate Bill 351

PRINTER NO. 353

AMOUNT

See Fiscal Impact

FUND

General Fund

DATE INTRODUCED

March 10, 2021

PRIME SPONSOR

Senator Langerholc

DESCRIPTION

Senate Bill 351 establishes a new Article XV-K (Community-Engaged Schools) in the Public School Code by establishing the Community-Engaged Schools for Success Pilot Program to encourage community engagement with community partners in the provision of student support services which remove academic and non-academic barriers to student success.

The legislation defines “engaged student support services” as supplemental services provided by school personnel or community partners, or both, to students in a school setting that remove academic and non-academic barriers to success but do not supplant services provided under the terms of a collective bargaining agreement. The term includes the following services: academic assistance, behavior interventions, community and service learning, family engagement, mental health services, health care services, dental health services, basic needs, college and career preparation, enrichment activities and life skills.

The legislation provides that any school operated by a school district is eligible for designation as a community-engaged school if it is ranked in the lowest 15% of the school’s designation as an elementary school or a secondary school based on combined mathematics and reading scores from the previous year or is located in a school district where the acute poverty percentage is equal to or greater than 30%.

The legislation requires a school seeking designation as a community-engaged school to submit an application to the Department of Education (department). It also provides for the Secretary of Education to select no less than 20 schools to be community-engaged schools.

The legislation requires that a school which is designated as a community-engaged school appoint a program manager and a coordinator within 60 days and develop and submit a community engagement plan to the secretary for approval. It requires a community engagement plan to include an evaluation and analysis of indicators of school and student performance and a qualitative and quantitative analysis that assess areas of need. It requires the secretary to approve submitted plans within 30 days or notify the school district of needed revisions. It provides that any denied plan may be resubmitted at the direction of the secretary.

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The legislation requires the department to develop an application process for eligible schools, develop minimum quality standards for an organization to qualify as a program manager and provide technical assistance to eligible schools. It requires the department to facilitate the sharing of best practices among community-engaged schools with other schools in the Commonwealth. It also requires the department to annually submit a report to the Governor and the majority and minority chairs of the House and Senate Education and Appropriations Committees on the information obtained from approved community-engaged schools.

The legislation provides that the department may award grants on a matching basis not to exceed \$125,000 to a school district for each community-engaged school upon approval of a community engagement plan. It provides that to the extent that money is available and a school continues to follow its community engagement plan, an annual grant award shall be made for five consecutive years. It specifies that no school district may receive a grant allocation that exceeds 10% of the money available for the program and that grant money under the program shall be geographically dispersed. Additionally, it specifies that the grant money shall be exclusively used to support a school's community engagement plan and that the money is subject to audit by the Auditor General.

The bill is scheduled to take effect immediately.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The fiscal impact of Senate Bill 351 will be dependent upon appropriations made by the General Assembly to support the grant program contained in the legislation. Assuming the minimum of 20 schools receive grants under the program at the maximum award amount of \$125,000, the cost of the grant program will be \$2,500,000 annually. Additionally, it is estimated that the Department of Education will be required to hire at least one additional staff person at a cost of \$150,000 for salary and benefits to administer the pilot program.