

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE FISCAL NOTE

BILL NO. Senate Bill 114

PRINTER NO. 18

AMOUNT

\$450,000

FUND

General Fund

DATE INTRODUCED

January 9, 2023

PRIME SPONSOR

Senator Brooks

DESCRIPTION

Senate Bill 114 amends Section 1550 (Firefighter and Emergency Service Training) of the Public School Code of 1949 to establish the Secondary Education Fire Training Pilot Program to provide high school students with firefighter training through partnerships between institutions of higher education and school entities and nonpublic schools, or both.

The legislation requires the State Fire Commissioner to accept proposals submitted by institutions of higher education and to select three institutions of higher education from different regions to offer the pilot program. It requires the selected institutions of higher education to enter into an agreement with a school entity or nonpublic school, or both, to provide firefighter training to students in at least the ninth grade that leads to Firefighter I certification. It also requires the pilot program to be implemented in accordance with Section 7 (Minors Serving in Volunteer Emergency Service Organizations) of the Child Labor Act.

The legislation establishes a non-lapsing restricted account in the State Treasury, to be known as the Fire Training Fund, whereby the State Fire Commissioner may accept donations or other money for deposit into the fund on behalf of the Commonwealth.

The legislation provides that each of the three pilot programs selected shall receive at least \$150,000 for the duration of the pilot program.

The legislation requires the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee (LBFC) to conduct a survey of volunteer fire companies in the municipalities surrounding the school entities and nonpublic schools that participate in the pilot program to determine whether the pilot program increased the number of volunteer firefighters and to make additional recommendations. It requires the survey results to be submitted to the chair and minority chair of the Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committees of the Senate and the House of Representatives within six months of the expiration of the pilot program.

The legislation defines an institution of higher education as a community college operating under Article XIX-A, a college operating under XIX-G (Northern Pennsylvania Regional College) or a university within the State System of Higher Education. It also defines a school entity as a school district, intermediate unit, area

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career and technical school, charter school, cyber charter school or regional charter school.

The legislation is scheduled to take effect January 1, 2024, or immediately, whichever is later and provides for the pilot program to expire four years from the effective date of the legislation.

FISCAL IMPACT

The enactment of Senate Bill 114 will cost the Commonwealth \$450,000 as the legislation requires each of the three institutions of higher education offering the pilot program to receive at least \$150,000 for the duration of the pilot program.

The provisions contained in the legislation requiring the LBFC to survey municipalities surrounding schools that participate in the pilot program will add to the committee's administrative responsibilities. Based on information provided by the LBFC, the average cost of a project which the agency is statutorily directed to perform is estimated to be \$151,510. However, LBFC believes that the survey contained in Senate Bill 114 can be accomplished within its existing operating budget because surveys require minimal staff time when compared to more extensive reports, and the deadline for the survey to be completed is far enough in advance that it can be accommodated in its annual spending plan.