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THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

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SENATE BILL

No. 144 Session of  
2019

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INTRODUCED BY MARTIN, AUMENT, COSTA, BROWNE, K. WARD, MENSCH,  
BLAKE, FONTANA, J. WARD, REGAN, YUDICHAK AND HAYWOOD,  
MARCH 4, 2019

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REFERRED TO EDUCATION, MARCH 4, 2019

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AN ACT

1 Amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), entitled "An  
2 act relating to the public school system, including certain  
3 provisions applicable as well to private and parochial  
4 schools; amending, revising, consolidating and changing the  
5 laws relating thereto," providing for the Keystone  
6 Telepresence Education Grant Program.

7 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
8 hereby enacts as follows:

9 Section 1. The act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known  
10 as the Public School Code of 1949, is amended by adding an  
11 article to read:

12 ARTICLE XV-J

13 KEYSTONE TELEPRESENCE EDUCATION GRANT PROGRAM

14 Section 1501-J. Scope of article.

15 This article relates to the Keystone Telepresence Education  
16 Grant Program.

17 Section 1502-J. Definitions.

18 The following words and phrases when used in this article  
19 shall have the meanings given to them in this section unless the

1 context clearly indicates otherwise:

2 "Department." The Department of Education of the  
3 Commonwealth.

4 "Grant." A Keystone Telepresence Education Grant authorized  
5 and awarded by the department under the program to intermediate  
6 units in this Commonwealth.

7 "Homebound student." A student in this Commonwealth who:

8 (1) is unable to attend school for an extended period as  
9 the result of a serious medical condition, including injuries  
10 from an accident, recovery from a medical procedure, serious  
11 illness or chronic illness; and

12 (2) satisfies the conditions for receipt of homebound  
13 instruction under 22 Pa. Code § 11.25 (relating to temporary  
14 excusals due to illness or other urgent reasons).

15 "Program." The Keystone Telepresence Education Grant Program  
16 established under section 1503-J(a).

17 "Secretary." The Secretary of Education of the Commonwealth.

18 "Telepresence equipment." Available technology that enables  
19 homebound students to participate in daily educational  
20 activities with the students' classmates and teachers, in real-  
21 time, from a remote location. The technology shall include audio  
22 and video capabilities that enable homebound students to  
23 communicate with classmates and teachers.

24 "Telepresence equipment manufacturer." An entity that  
25 manufactures telepresence equipment for the use of, among other  
26 things, educating homebound students and provides technical  
27 support and training for the equipment.

28 Section 1503-J. Keystone Telepresence Education Grant Program.

29 (a) Establishment.--The Keystone Telepresence Education  
30 Grant Program is established for the purpose of awarding grants

1 to intermediate units for the purchase of telepresence equipment  
2 and related support services for the educational support of  
3 homebound students. The department shall:

4 (1) Develop guidelines for the purchase of telepresence  
5 equipment and services related to the utilization of the  
6 equipment through the program, including department-approved  
7 telepresence equipment manufacturers.

8 (2) Determine the form and manner in which an  
9 application for a grant may be filed with the department.

10 (3) Provide notice of the program to intermediate units.

11 (4) Make grant applications available to all  
12 intermediate units along with details relating to the  
13 application process.

14 (5) Adopt guidelines for the approval of grant  
15 applications.

16 (b) Eligibility.--Each intermediate unit shall be eligible  
17 for a grant.

18 (c) Application.--An intermediate unit may apply for a grant  
19 by submitting one annual application to the department. The  
20 secretary shall determine in accordance with the guidelines of  
21 the department the amount of a grant award to an intermediate  
22 unit.

23 (d) Allocation.--To award grants under the program, the  
24 department shall use up to \$300,000 annually of undistributed  
25 funds not expended, encumbered or committed from appropriations  
26 for grants and subsidies made to the department to award grants.  
27 The funds shall be transferred by the Secretary of the Budget to  
28 a restricted account as necessary to award grants and, when  
29 transferred, are appropriated to carry out the provisions of  
30 this article.

1 (e) Limitations.--An intermediate unit may not receive an  
2 annual grant allocation that exceeds 10% of the funds available  
3 under the grant program.

4 Section 1504-J. Intermediate unit policies.

5 (a) Telepresence equipment use.--An intermediate unit shall  
6 develop an internal policy for the use of telepresence equipment  
7 and related support services prior to applying for a grant. The  
8 policy shall include guidelines for the process by which public  
9 schools, nonpublic schools or other educational entities within  
10 the intermediate unit may request the use of telepresence  
11 equipment through an intermediate unit.

12 (b) Dissemination.--An intermediate unit shall, upon  
13 request, provide the policy under subsection (a) to a public  
14 school, nonpublic school or other educational entity within the  
15 intermediate unit.

16 (c) Policy modification.--A public school, nonpublic school  
17 or other educational entity within an intermediate unit may  
18 request that the intermediate unit modify its policy for the use  
19 of telepresence equipment and related support services to meet  
20 the needs of a homebound student.

21 Section 1505-J. Use of grants.

22 (a) Equipment.--An intermediate unit which is awarded a  
23 grant shall use the grant to purchase telepresence equipment.

24 (b) Service and training.--A grant may be used, in part, to  
25 secure technical support, mechanical support and training  
26 support related to the use of telepresence equipment.

27 Section 1506-J. Reports.

28 An intermediate unit which is awarded a grant shall submit to  
29 the department a report detailing all expenditures related to  
30 the use of the grant.

1 Section 1507-J. Prohibition.

2 An intermediate unit that purchases telepresence equipment  
3 with a grant may not charge a public school, nonpublic school or  
4 other educational entity within the intermediate unit for the  
5 use of the telepresence equipment when the equipment is used to  
6 support the educational needs of a homebound student.

7 Section 1508-J. Construction.

8 Nothing in this article shall be construed to require or  
9 create an entitlement to telepresence equipment as a component  
10 of an individualized education plan for any student in this  
11 Commonwealth.

12 Section 2. This act shall take effect in 90 days.