AN ACT RELATING TO EDUCATION -- CATEGORICAL PROGRAMS, STATE FUNDED EXPENSES

Introduced By: Representative Katherine S. Kazarian

Date Introduced: June 19, 2020

Referred To: House Finance

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

SECTION 1. Section 16-7.2-6 of the General Laws in Chapter 16-7.2 entitled “The Education Equity and Property Tax Relief Act” is hereby amended to read as follows:

16-7.2-6. Categorical programs, state funded expenses. In addition to the foundation education aid provided pursuant to § 16-7.2-3, the permanent foundation education-aid program shall provide direct state funding for:

(a) Excess costs associated with special education students. Excess costs are defined when an individual special education student's cost shall be deemed to be "extraordinary". Extraordinary costs are those educational costs that exceed the state-approved threshold based on an amount above five times the core foundation amount (total of core-instruction amount plus student success amount). The department of elementary and secondary education shall prorate the funds available for distribution among those eligible school districts if the total approved costs for which school districts are seeking reimbursement exceed the amount of funding appropriated in any fiscal year; and the department of elementary and secondary education shall also collect data on those educational costs that exceed the state-approved threshold based on an amount above two (2), three (3), and four (4) times the core-foundation amount;

(b) Career and technical education costs to help meet initial investment requirements needed to transform existing, or create new, comprehensive, career and technical education programs and career pathways in critical and emerging industries and to help offset the higher-
than-average costs associated with facilities, equipment maintenance and repair, and supplies necessary for maintaining the quality of highly specialized programs that are a priority for the state. The department shall develop criteria for the purpose of allocating any and all career and technical education funds as may be determined by the general assembly on an annual basis. The department of elementary and secondary education shall prorate the funds available for distribution among those eligible school districts if the total approved costs for which school districts are seeking reimbursement exceed the amount of funding available in any fiscal year;

(c) Programs to increase access to voluntary, free, high-quality pre-kindergarten programs. The department shall recommend criteria for the purpose of allocating any and all early childhood program funds as may be determined by the general assembly;

(d) Central Falls, Davies, and the Met Center Stabilization Fund is established to ensure that appropriate funding is available to support their students. Additional support for Central Falls is needed due to concerns regarding the city's capacity to meet the local share of education costs. This fund requires that education aid calculated pursuant to § 16-7.2-3 and funding for costs outside the permanent foundation education-aid formula, including, but not limited to, transportation, facility maintenance, and retiree health benefits shall be shared between the state and the city of Central Falls. The fund shall be annually reviewed to determine the amount of the state and city appropriation. The state's share of this fund may be supported through a reallocation of current state appropriations to the Central Falls school district. At the end of the transition period defined in § 16-7.2-7, the municipality will continue its contribution pursuant to § 16-7-24. Additional support for the Davies and the Met Center is needed due to the costs associated with running a stand-alone high school offering both academic and career and technical coursework. The department shall recommend criteria for the purpose of allocating any and all stabilization funds as may be determined by the general assembly;

(e) Excess costs associated with transporting students to out-of-district non-public schools. This fund will provide state funding for the costs associated with transporting students to out-of-district non-public schools, pursuant to chapter 21.1 of this title. The state will assume the costs of non-public out-of-district transportation for those districts participating in the statewide system. The department of elementary and secondary education shall prorate the funds available for distribution among those eligible school districts if the total approved costs for which school districts are seeking reimbursement exceed the amount of funding available in any fiscal year;

(f) Excess costs associated with transporting students within regional school districts. This fund will provide direct state funding for the excess costs associated with transporting students within regional school districts, established pursuant to chapter 3 of this title. This fund requires
that the state and regional school district share equally the student transportation costs net any
federal sources of revenue for these expenditures. The department of elementary and secondary
education shall prorate the funds available for distribution among those eligible school districts if
the total approved costs for which school districts are seeking reimbursement exceed the amount
of funding available in any fiscal year;

(g) Public school districts that are regionalized shall be eligible for a regionalization bonus
as set forth below:

(1) As used herein, the term "regionalized" shall be deemed to refer to a regional school
district established under the provisions of chapter 3 of this title, including the Chariho Regional
School district;

(2) For those districts that are regionalized as of July 1, 2010, the regionalization bonus
shall commence in FY 2012. For those districts that regionalize after July 1, 2010, the
regionalization bonus shall commence in the first fiscal year following the establishment of a
regionalized school district as set forth in chapter 3 of this title, including the Chariho Regional
School District;

(3) The regionalization bonus in the first fiscal year shall be two percent (2.0%) of the
state's share of the foundation education aid for the regionalized district as calculated pursuant to
§§ 16-7.2-3 and 16-7.2-4 in that fiscal year;

(4) The regionalization bonus in the second fiscal year shall be one percent (1.0%) of the
state's share of the foundation education aid for the regionalized district as calculated pursuant to
§§ 16-7.2-3 and 16-7.2-4 in that fiscal year;

(5) The regionalization bonus shall cease in the third fiscal year;

(6) The regionalization bonus for the Chariho regional school district shall be applied to
the state share of the permanent foundation education aid for the member towns; and

(7) The department of elementary and secondary education shall prorate the funds available
for distribution among those eligible regionalized school districts if the total, approved costs for
which regionalized school districts are seeking a regionalization bonus exceed the amount of
funding appropriated in any fiscal year;

(h) Additional state support for English learners (EL). The amount to support EL students
shall be determined by multiplying an EL factor of ten percent (10%) by the core-instruction per-
pupil amount defined in § 16-7.2-3(a)(1) and applying that amount of additional state support to
EL students identified using widely adopted, independent standards and assessments identified by
the commissioner. All categorical funds distributed pursuant to this subsection must be used to
provide high-quality, research-based services to EL students and managed in accordance with
requirements set forth by the commissioner of elementary and secondary education. The department of elementary and secondary education shall collect performance reports from districts and approve the use of funds prior to expenditure. The department of elementary and secondary education shall ensure the funds are aligned to activities that are innovative and expansive and not utilized for activities the district is currently funding. The department of elementary and secondary education shall prorate the funds available for distribution among eligible recipients if the total calculated costs exceed the amount of funding available in any fiscal year;

(i) State support for school resource officers. For purposes of this subsection, a school resource officer (SRO) shall be defined as a career law enforcement officer with sworn authority who is deployed by an employing police department or agency in a community-oriented policing assignment to work in collaboration with one or more schools. School resource officers should have completed at least forty (40) hours of specialized training in school policing, administered by an accredited agency, before being assigned. Beginning in FY 2019, for a period of three (3) years, school districts or municipalities that choose to employ school resource officer social workers shall receive direct state support for costs associated with employing such social workers at public middle and high schools. Districts or municipalities shall be reimbursed an amount equal to one-half (1/2) of the cost of salaries and benefits for the qualifying positions. Funding will be provided for school resource officer positions established on or after July 1, 2018, provided that:

(1) Each school resource officer shall be assigned to one school:

(i) Schools with enrollments below one thousand twelve hundred (1,200) students shall require one school resource officer;

(ii) Schools with enrollments of one thousand twelve hundred (1,200) or more students shall require two school resource officers;

(2) School resource officers hired in excess of the requirement noted above shall not be eligible for reimbursement; and

(3) Schools that eliminate existing school resource officer positions and create new positions under this provision shall not be eligible for reimbursement; and

(j) Categorical programs defined in (a) through (g) shall be funded pursuant to the transition plan in § 16-7.2-7.

(k) In addition to the state support for school social workers as set forth in subsection (i) of this section, the general assembly shall appropriate out of money in the treasury not otherwise appropriated for the fiscal year 2020-2021, an additional sum of two million dollars ($2,000,000) for fiscal year 2021 for the purpose of allowing school districts or municipalities to employ...
additional school social workers.

SECTION 2. This act shall take effect on July 1, 2021.
This act would provide that school districts that employ social workers would receive direct state support for costs associated with employing social workers. The act would further provide for an appropriation of two million dollars ($2,000,000) to school districts for employment of social workers for FY-2021.

This act would take effect on July 1, 2021.