



Senate

General Assembly

File No. 264

February Session, 2008

Senate Bill No. 418

Senate, March 31, 2008

The Committee on Human Services reported through SEN. HARRIS of the 5th Dist., Chairperson of the Committee on the part of the Senate, that the bill ought to pass.

***AN ACT CONCERNING THE HIRING OF SUPPORT STAFF FOR
TEACHERS OF THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED.***

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1 Section 1. Subsection (b) of section 10-295 of the general statutes is
2 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July*
3 *1, 2008*):

4 (b) The Board of Education and Services for the Blind shall expend
5 funds for the services made available pursuant to subsection (a) of this
6 section from the educational aid for blind and visually handicapped
7 children account in accordance with the provisions of this subsection.
8 The expense of such services shall be paid by the state in an amount
9 not to exceed six thousand four hundred dollars in any one fiscal year
10 for each child who is blind or visually impaired. The Board of
11 Education and Services for the Blind may adopt such regulations as it
12 deems necessary to carry out the purpose and intent of this subsection.

13 (1) The Board of Education and Services for the Blind shall provide,

14 upon written request from any interested school district, the services of
15 teachers of the visually impaired, based on the levels established in the
16 individualized education or service plan. The agency shall also make
17 available its resources, including, but not limited to, the Braille and
18 large print library, to all teachers of public and nonpublic school
19 children. The agency may also provide vision-related professional
20 development and training to all school districts and cover the actual
21 cost for paraprofessionals from school districts to participate in
22 agency-sponsored Braille training programs. The agency shall utilize
23 education consultant positions authorized as of July 1, 2001, funded by
24 moneys appropriated from the General Fund, to supplement new
25 staffing that will be made available through the educational aid for the
26 blind and visually handicapped children account, which shall be
27 governed by formal written policies established by the agency.

28 (2) The Board of Education and Services for the Blind shall use
29 funds appropriated to said account, first to provide specialized books,
30 materials, equipment, supplies, adaptive technology services and
31 devices, specialist examinations and aids, preschool programs and
32 vision-related independent living services, excluding primary
33 educational placement, for eligible children without regard to a per
34 child statutory maximum.

35 (3) The Board of Education and Services for the Blind may, within
36 available appropriations, employ certified teachers of the visually
37 impaired in sufficient numbers to meet the requests for services
38 received from school districts. In responding to such requests, the
39 agency shall utilize a formula for determining the number of teachers
40 needed to serve the school districts, crediting six points for each
41 Braille-learning child and one point for each other child, with one full-
42 time certified teacher of the visually impaired assigned for every
43 twenty-five points credited. The agency shall exercise due diligence to
44 employ the needed number of certified teachers of the visually
45 impaired, but shall not be liable for lack of resources. Funds
46 appropriated to said account may also be utilized to employ
47 rehabilitation teachers, rehabilitation technologists and orientation and

48 mobility teachers in numbers sufficient to provide compensatory skills
49 evaluations and training to blind and visually impaired children. In
50 addition, up to five per cent of such appropriation may also be utilized
51 to employ special assistants to the blind and other support staff
52 necessary to ensure the efficient operation of service delivery. Not later
53 than October first of each year, the Board of Education and Services for
54 the Blind shall determine the number of teachers needed based on the
55 formula provided in this subdivision. Based on such determination the
56 Board of Education and Services for the Blind shall estimate the
57 funding needed to pay such teachers' salaries, benefits and related
58 expenses.

59 (4) In any fiscal year, when funds appropriated to cover the
60 combined costs associated with providing the services set forth in
61 subdivisions (2) and (3) of this subsection are projected to be
62 insufficient, the Board of Education and Services for the Blind shall be
63 authorized to collect revenue from all school districts that have
64 requested such services on a per student pro rata basis, in the sums
65 necessary to cover the projected portion of these services for which
66 there are insufficient appropriations.

67 (5) Remaining funds in said account, not expended to fund the
68 services set forth in subdivisions (2) and (3) of this subsection, shall be
69 used to cover on a pro rata basis, the actual cost with benefits of
70 retaining a teacher of the visually impaired, directly hired or
71 contracted by the school districts which opt to not seek such services
72 from the Board of Education and Services for the Blind, provided such
73 teacher has participated in not less than five hours of professional
74 development training on vision impairment or blindness during the
75 school year. Reimbursement shall occur at the completion of the school
76 year, using the caseload formula denoted in subdivision (3) of this
77 section, with twenty-five points allowed for the maximum
78 reimbursable amount as established by the agency annually.

79 (6) Remaining funds in such account, not expended to fund the
80 services set forth in subdivisions (2), (3) and (5) of this subsection, shall

81 be distributed to the school districts on a pro rata formula basis with a
82 two-to-one credit ratio for Braille-learning students to non-Braille-
83 learning students in the school district based upon the annual child
84 count data provided pursuant to subdivision (1) of this subsection,
85 provided the school district submits an annual progress report in a
86 format prescribed by the agency for each eligible child.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
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Section 1	<i>July 1, 2008</i>	10-295(b)
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HS *Joint Favorable*

The following fiscal impact statement and bill analysis are prepared for the benefit of members of the General Assembly, solely for the purpose of information, summarization, and explanation, and do not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose:

OFA Fiscal Note

State Impact:

Agency Affected	Fund-Effect	FY 09 \$	FY 10 \$
Board of Education & Services for the Blind	GF - None	None	None

Note: GF=General Fund

Municipal Impact:

Municipalities	Effect	FY 09 \$	FY 10 \$
Various Regional and Local School Districts	Revenue Loss	Up to \$357,842	Up to \$357,842

Explanation

The bill allows the Board of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB) to use up to 5% of the Educational Aid for Blind and Visually Handicapped Children account appropriation to employ special assistants to the blind¹ and other support staff². This provision will reduce the available dollars for the year-end disbursements³ to school districts (5% of the FY 09 appropriation is \$357,842).

It should be noted that the Educational Aid account in FY 07 expended \$7.1 million, the breakout is as follows: \$1.4 million for books, equipment, supplies, adaptive technology services, vision and other educational related services for blind or visually impaired

¹ The annual cost of a Special Assistant to the Blind is \$51,740 (annual salary of \$30,922 and fringe benefits \$18,000); fringe benefits would be paid from the Educational Aid for the Blind and Visually Handicapped Children account.

² The annual cost of a Clerk Typist is \$51,800 (annual salary of \$32,800 and fringe benefits of \$19,000); fringe benefits would be paid from the Educational Aid for the Blind and Visually Handicapped account.

³ The year-end disbursement is a statutory formula, once all other program costs have been factored, disbursed on a pro-rata basis, with a two-to-one credit ratio for Braille-learning students to non-Braille learning students that are blind or visually impaired. FY 07 disbursement to towns totaled \$2.9 million.

children in the school system statewide; \$1.2 million for salaries, wages and fringes for BESB teachers of the visually impaired used by various school districts statewide; \$1.6 million reimbursed to 23 towns that hire their own teachers of the visually impaired; and \$2.9 million for year-end disbursements to towns/school districts.

The Out Years

The annualized ongoing fiscal impact identified above would continue into the future subject to variance in the level of appropriation.

OLR Bill Analysis**SB 418*****AN ACT CONCERNING THE HIRING OF SUPPORT STAFF FOR
TEACHERS OF THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED*****SUMMARY:**

This bill authorizes up to 5% of the Board of Education and Services to the Blind's (BESB) Educational Aid for the Blind and Visually Handicapped account appropriation to be used to employ "special assistants to the blind" and other support staff needed to ensure services are delivered efficiently. By law, BESB must generally provide teachers of the visually impaired, when school districts request them, as well as other resources. It can already use funds from this account to employ these teachers, as well as rehabilitation teachers and technologists and orientation and mobility teachers.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2008

BACKGROUND***Priority System for Educational Aid Account***

In 2003, the legislature established a priority system for BESB to use when providing and paying for educational services to blind and visually impaired children. Funds from the account must be spent in the following order: (1) to pay for goods and services, such as books; (2) to pay for teaching services that school districts request directly from BESB; and (3) to reimburse towns that purchase these services on their own. BESB can charge districts for any goods or services if the account has insufficient funds. If there are any funds left, they go to the school districts on a pro rata basis, with a two-to-one credit ratio for Braille-learning students to non-Braille-learning students.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Human Services Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 19 Nay 0 (03/11/2008)