
OLR BILL ANALYSIS

HB 6385 (LCO 3559)

***AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS OF
THE GOVERNOR CONCERNING EDUCATION***

SUMMARY:

Unless otherwise noted below, all sections are effective July 1, 2011.

§§ 1-9 - EDUCATION GRANT CAPS

For two more years, through June 30, 2013, the bill caps the following state education formula grants to school districts and regional education service centers (RESCs) at the amounts appropriated in the budget:

1. health services for private school students (§ 1)
2. transportation for public and private school students (§§ 2 & 4)
3. adult education (§ 3)
4. bilingual education programs (§ 5)
5. RESC operating grants (§ 6)
6. special education excess costs (§§ 7 & 8)
7. regular education costs for state-placed children educated by local and regional boards of education (§ 9)

If the appropriated amounts are not sufficient to fully fund the grants, amounts must be proportionately reduced.

§§ 10, 11 – STUDIES AND PLANS

The bill requires:

1. the RESC Alliance to study the feasibility of implementing uniform regional school calendars and transportation services

and report to governor by October 15, 2011 and

2. the education and social services commissioners to develop a plan to integrate the child day care and school readiness services offered as part of the school readiness program and report to the governor by July 1, 2012. The plans must address eligibility, slot rates, and program requirements.

§§ 12 & 13 – OPEN CHOICE PROGRAM

For FYs 12 and 13, the bill requires:

1. the State Department of Education (SDE) to provide annual grants to each receiving school district based on the percentage of its total student population that comes from outside the district, and
2. unused Open Choice appropriations over \$500,000 to be used for pro rata supplemental grants to receiving districts that report by March 1 that their number of out-of-district students in the current school year is higher than the year before.

In each case, the education commissioner must determine the grant amounts.

After distributing the supplemental grants described in # 2 above, the bill requires the commissioner to use any remaining nonlapsing funds to increase Open Choice enrollment.

§ 14 – TASK FORCE TO STUDY ECS FORMULA

The bill establishes an 11-member task force to study the ECS formula and report its findings and recommendations to the governor by January 1, 2012.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

§ 15 – ECS MINIMUM BUDGET REQUIREMENT

For FYs 12 and 13, the bill requires towns to budget at least the same amount for education as they budgeted for FY 09. (Note: A provision extending current ECS grants for FYs 12 and 13 appears in § 37 of the

budget bill (HB 6380, An Act Concerning the Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2013)).

§§ 16-18 - TRANSFER OF STATE VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL (V-T) SCHOOLS TO LOCAL OR REGIONAL BOARDS OF EDUCATION

§ 16-18 - V-T Transfer Plan, Deadline, Transfer Grants

The bill establishes a series of steps for the state to transfer operations of state V-T schools to the local or regional boards of education or RESCs where they are located. It requires a plan to complete this transfer by July 1, 2015, creates a grant program to help pay for implementing the school transfer, and transfers certain responsibilities from the V-T system superintendent to the principals of the individual schools on July 1, 2011.

The bill requires the education commissioner, in consultation with the OPM secretary, the local or regional school districts, and RESCs serving the areas where V-T schools are located, to develop a plan by January 1, 2012 to transfer the operations of the V-T schools. The plan must include provisions that (1) give the local or regional board of education the opportunity to vote to inherit the operations of the V-T school and (2) require the appropriate RESC to accept a V-T school's operations if the local or regional board votes not to accept it.

SDE must establish a program to provide grants to local and regional boards and RESCs to help implement the transfer of V-T schools and for the schools operational costs. Grant applications must be submitted to the education commissioner and must include a plan for how the grant will be spent. SDE must develop and apply evaluation procedures to measure the effectiveness of the grant program and provide grant recipients with technical assistance and other support.

Grant recipients must file expenditure reports with the commissioner and must refund any unspent amounts or amounts not spent in accordance with the grant application.

§ 18 - V-T Employees and Union Contracts

Under the bill, the transfer of the schools to local or regional boards or RESCs will not affect the existing union contracts under the Teacher Negotiation Act (TNA). When existing contracts expire, the bill requires any employee who was employed at the V-T school before the transfer to remain a member of the same collective bargaining unit in accordance with state employee collective bargaining rules. Those hired after the transfer must become members of the union named the exclusive bargaining agent under the TNA.

§§ 19-22 - ELIMINATES PROVISIONS OF PA 10-76, AAC VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL SCHOOLS

Reduces Size of State Board of Education

The bill reduces the State Board of Education (SBE) from 13 to 11 members and eliminates the requirement that at least two members have experience in a trade offered at V-T schools or be an alumnus of or teach at V-T schools. It eliminates the board's V-T subcommittee.

It also eliminates a requirement that one SBE member have experience in agriculture or be an alumnus of, or past educator at, a regional agricultural science and technology center

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

Reinstates V-T Advisory Council

The bill reinstates a statewide V-T school system advisory council charged with identifying workforce needs and recommending the needs be addressed in V-T curriculum. The council must reflect the state's racial and geographic diversity and consist of 19 members: 10 appointed by the governor and legislative leaders and who represent businesses of various sizes; the commissioners of education, labor, economic and community development or their designees; an Office of Workforce Competitiveness (OWC) representative; the SBE chairperson or designee; and the Education Committee's co-chairs and ranking members. The council must meet at least twice a year to assess these needs.

Required Annual Legislative Meeting and Report

The bill eliminates a required annual meeting of the Education, Higher Education and Employment Advancement, and Labor committees with the V-T superintendent, the OWC director, the labor commissioner, and other appropriate people to consider information each official must submit to the committees by November 15 annually.

Required V-T School Bonding

The bill repeals a requirement that, when there is enough of an aggregate balance of bonds authorized but unallocated for general maintenance and capital and trade equipment for any V-T school, the State Bond Commission vote at its August and February meetings annually on whether to allocate at least \$2 million from those authorizations.

V-T School Budget Posting

The bill eliminates the requirement that the V-T superintendent post the operating budget of each school for the current year on the V-T system's and the school's website.

§§ 23-70 - CONFORMING CHANGES

These sections include conforming and technical changes related to the V-T school transfers.

§ 71 – REPEALED REQUIREMENTS

The bill repeals requirements that:

1. SBE develop recommendations to define the regions served by the state V-T schools for attendance purposes;
2. SDE study the relationship between V-T school admission scores and student performance;
3. the state follow certain steps before closing or suspending a V-T school;
4. SDE inspect all V-T buses on or before July 15 of each year;

5. SBE replace any V-T school buses that are (a) more than 12 years old or (b) have been out of service for two consecutive years for the same reason.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

PRELIMINARY