

OFFICE OF FISCAL ANALYSIS

Legislative Office Building, Room 5200
Hartford, CT 06106 ◊ (860) 240-0200
<http://www.cga.ct.gov/ofa>

sHB-5468

AN ACT CONCERNING THE PROVISION OF EQUIVALENT INSTRUCTION.

OFA Fiscal Note

State Impact:

Agency Affected	Fund-Effect	FY 27 \$	FY 28 \$	FY 29 \$
Education, Dept.	GF - Cost	400,000	550,000	At least 400,000
Children & Families, Dept.	GF - Potential Cost	None	23,400	23,400

Note: GF=General Fund

Municipal Impact:

Municipalities	Effect	FY 27 \$	FY 28 \$	FY 29 \$
Local and Regional School Districts	Revenue Gain	None	None	See Below
Local and Regional School Districts	STATE MANDATE ¹ - Potential Cost	None	Potential Minimal	Potential Minimal

Explanation

The bill, which establishes a regulatory framework for students educated in a setting other than public or nonpublic school, results in the fiscal impacts described below by section.

Sections 1 and 4 result in an annual cost of \$400,000 to the State

¹ State mandate is defined in Sec. 2-32b(2) of the Connecticut General Statutes, "state mandate" means any state initiated constitutional, statutory or executive action that requires a local government to establish, expand or modify its activities in such a way as to necessitate additional expenditures from local revenues.

Department of Education (SDE), beginning in FY 27, to implement the bill's regulatory framework and develop, distribute, and maintain guidance regarding the bill's provisions. This funding is required to expand capacity annually as needed.

Section 1 results in potential minimal staffing costs to local and regional Boards of Education (BOEs) annually beginning in FY 28. It is anticipated that some BOEs may need to hire additional staff to implement the bill's regulatory framework, which includes forms received by the BOE and, in certain situations, attempts to contact families. The number of staff hired will vary based on the number of students subject to the framework.

Additionally, Section 1 requires certain Department of Children and Families' (DCF) records checks when parents submit a form to withdraw their children from public school for equivalent instruction, resulting in a potential cost to DCF of \$23,400 in FY 28 (and annually thereafter) to hire a Careline processing technician (0.5 FTE) who would support any increase in case search volume associated with the bill's requirements.

The framework established by the bill requires: (1) parents who withdraw a student from public school to sign a withdrawal form in person, beginning in FY 28; (2) certain parents² to sign an intent to educate form,³ beginning in FY 29; (3) parents who withdrew their child to receive equivalent instruction (homeschooling) to annually sign a continuation of equivalent instruction form electronically, beginning in FY 30; (4) BOEs to attempt to contact parents who do not submit required continuation of equivalent instruction forms by September 1, beginning in FY 29, and if they are unable to contact the parents they must notify SDE; and (5) BOEs to contact DCF within two business days

² Parents subject to this requirement include: (1) parents of children who turn five by September 1 of the school year; (2) parents who signed, the previous year, the form deferring their five or six year old from starting school, or whose child is five or six years old; (3) parents of school-aged children who move into a school district; and (4) parents who withdraw their child from a nonpublic school.

³ Parents must indicate whether their child will: (1) enroll in public school; (2) enroll in nonpublic school, with evidence of said enrollment; or (3) receive equivalent instruction.

of receiving a withdrawal form.

Section 2 results in a potential minimal cost to BOEs to receive demonstrations of equivalent instruction⁴ or to contract with another entity to receive such demonstrations, beginning in FY 29. The cost is dependent on the number of children receiving equivalent instruction, the complexity of the demonstrations, and the terms of any contract. The section requires parents of children receiving equivalent instruction to submit demonstrations of equivalent instruction annually to their resident BOE. BOEs can contract with Regional Educational Service Centers (RESCs), magnet school operators, or the State Education Resource Center (SERC) to receive demonstrations of equivalent instruction.

Section 3 results in a revenue gain to BOEs and a corresponding cost to SDE annually beginning in FY 29. It requires students receiving equivalent instruction pursuant to the bill to be included as one-tenth of a resident student in a town's Education Cost Sharing (ECS) grant. The revenue gain and corresponding cost is dependent on the number of children receiving equivalent instruction in a town, and that town's ECS grant per student. In FY 27 under current law, the ECS grant per resident student ranges from \$12,687 (Hartford) to \$116 (New Canaan) and the median is \$3,845 (Columbia).⁵

BOEs must submit an application to SDE to receive the portion of the ECS grant attributable to children receiving equivalent instruction.⁶ This portion of ECS funding must be used to: (1) implement the documentation requirements in Section 1; (2) review demonstrations of

⁴ Demonstrations of equivalent instruction can be one of the following: (1) a portfolio which may include curriculum, completed academic work, results from a nationally normed standardized test, or proof of completing online coursework; (2) the statewide mastery exam; or (3) a high school diploma from the GED test.

⁵ The rounded increase in ECS for Hartford, New Canaan, and Columbia per child receiving equivalent instruction using FY 27 ECS data and the current ECS foundation would be approximately \$1,269, \$12, and \$385 respectively.

⁶ This structure is similar to existing law for the Alliance District portion of ECS grants. ECS grants are paid to towns, but the Alliance District portion and the new equivalent instruction portion are paid entirely to the BOE.

equivalent instruction as required by Section 2, which may include contracting with a RESC, SERC, or magnet operator; and (3) determine the number of children of compulsory school age residing in the BOE's jurisdiction, as required under current law.

Section 5 results in a revenue gain to BOEs and a cost to SDE annually beginning in FY 29. It allows BOEs to permit children receiving equivalent instruction to take up to two classes, provided space is available, and participate in extracurricular activities. Such children are: (1) counted as a part time student in the district's enrollment; and (2) counted as an additional one-fourth of a resident student for ECS purposes.⁷ Similar to Section 3, including these students in the ECS resident student count results in a revenue gain to BOEs by increasing a town's ECS grant (assuming all other grant factors remain equal) and a corresponding cost to SDE. The cost is dependent on the number of children receiving equivalent instruction in a town, and, roughly, that town's ECS grant per student.⁸ This portion of the ECS grant is not subject to the same application and use conditions as the portion in Section 3.

Section 6 changes the definition of resident student in the ECS formula to include the one-tenth and one-fourth counts for children receiving equivalent instruction and children receiving equivalent instruction and participating in public school activities, respectively. This is a conforming change respective to the bill; however, the resident student count is used in the vocational agriculture and BOE-operated magnet school grant formulas. The change potentially results in changes to these grants, but as the data for these grants are updated annually, it is unknown to what extent they would be affected.

Section 7 results in a one-time cost of \$150,000 in FY 28 for SDE to

⁷ A child receiving equivalent instruction who participates in school activities is counted twice for ECS; once as one-tenth of a student (under Section 3) and once as one-fourth of a student (under Section 5).

⁸ The increase in ECS for Hartford, New Canaan, and Columbia per child receiving equivalent instruction and participating in classes or extracurricular activities in FY 27 would be approximately \$3,172, \$29, and \$961 respectively.

update the statewide education data system to include data about students receiving equivalent instruction. This funding is also necessary for SDE to implement data system requirements pursuant to Sections 5 and 6.

Section 8 makes a conforming and procedural change which has no fiscal impact.

The Out Years

The annualized ongoing fiscal impact identified above would continue into the future subject to the number of students participating in equivalent instruction, the number of forms submitted, and inflation.