

SB 1539 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Senate Committee On Education

Prepared By: Matthew Perreault, LPRO Analyst

Sub-Referral To: Senate Committee On Finance and Revenue

Meeting Dates: 2/3, 2/8

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Directs Oregon Department of Education (ODE) to establish pilot program that awards grants to school districts that have a significant population of homeless students. Specifies eligibility criteria for ODE to select seven districts that will receive grants. Requires districts to report annually on uses of grant funds. Requires that grant moneys be sourced from Statewide Education Initiatives Account and to provide direct assistance to homeless students. Prescribes funding formula for distribution of grants based on average daily membership (ADM) of homeless students in districts. Requires ODE to report annually to interim legislative committees on uses of grant funds by November 1. Becomes operative July 1, 2022. Sunsets July 1, 2025. Requires ODE and Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS) to jointly report to interim legislative committees on homeless student demographics and uses of grant funds for 2022-2023, 2023-2024, and 2024-2025 school years. Declares emergency, effective on passage.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Use of proposed funds for academic and wraparound services for homeless youth
- Relationship with McKinney-Vento Act
- Geographic representation of districts that would receive grants
- Funding formula for determining grant amounts

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

The federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 1987, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act, requires state and local education agencies to ensure equal access to free, appropriate public education for youth who lack adequate and stable housing. The law aims to reduce barriers to enrollment, provide school stability for homeless students, and promote collaboration between service providers. Accordingly, Oregon law prohibits school districts from disallowing enrollment on the basis of housing status. Each school district in Oregon appoints a Homeless Student Liaison to coordinate assistance to students experiencing homelessness, including programs funding by the Student Success Act (2019). According to ODE's most recent statewide report card, more than 17,600 public school students in Oregon were experiencing homelessness in the 2020-2021 school year. Several districts affected by the 2020 wildfires reported high levels of student homelessness.

Senate Bill 1539 directs ODE to create a temporary pilot program that will issue grants to seven selected school districts with high levels of students who are homeless, provides for funding from the Statewide Educational Initiatives Account through the 2023-2025 biennium, and requires annual reports on uses of grant funds until 2026.