
SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Senator Anthony Portantino, Chair
2021 - 2022 Regular Session

SB 540 (Limón) - Pupil instruction: improving pupil success: grant program

Version: April 7, 2021

Urgency: No

Hearing Date: May 3, 2021

Policy Vote: ED. 6 - 1

Mandate: No

Consultant: Lenin Del Castillo

Bill Summary: This bill requires the California Department of Education (CDE), subject to an appropriation, to administer a grant program to provide additional targeted assistance to 10 low-performing school districts with identified opportunity gaps among their peers, including but not limited to, opportunity gaps for pupils of color and pupils from low-income backgrounds, to help those school districts close their opportunity gaps.

Fiscal Impact: While the proposed grant program would be contingent upon an appropriation, this bill would result in Proposition 98 General Fund cost pressure of \$12.5 million per year for each of the 2021-22, 2022-23 and 2023-24 fiscal years for a three-year total of \$37.5 million. This amount assumes that each of the 10 selected school districts would receive a grant of \$1.25 million per year.

The CDE anticipates additional General Fund costs of approximately \$229,000 each year for a five-year period to administer the program.

Background: According to the LAO report, *Narrowing California's K-12 Student Achievement Gaps*, published January 31, 2020, "year after year, Latino and African American students consistently have lower average state standardized test scores than white and Asian students. Latino and African American students also tend to have worse outcomes on other academic performance measures, such as attendance and suspension rates. Similar achievement gaps can be observed between students with and without disabilities and students who do and do not come from low-income families." Moreover, "African American and Latino students comprise a disproportionate share of certain student groups. Although African American students comprise 5.4 percent of all public school students in California, they make up a greater share of certain student subgroups. For example, 19 percent of foster youth and 8.3 percent of homeless youth are African American. In a similar vein, Latino youth make up 55 percent of all students, but 81 percent of English learners and 71 percent of low-income students."

The LAO work group proposed four options for consideration by the Legislature, including the establishment of an academic assistance program for the lowest-performing Districts.

Proposed Law: This bill requires the CDE, contingent upon an appropriation by the Legislature in the annual Budget Act or another statute for these purposes, to administer a grant program to provide additional targeted assistance to 10 low-performing school districts with identified opportunity gaps among peers, including for

pupils of color and pupils from low-income backgrounds, to help those school districts close their opportunity gaps.

This bill requires the school districts to be competitively selected based on 2018–19 fiscal year data on the California School Dashboard, and provides that CDE allocate \$1,250,000 to each of the 10 selected school districts under the grant program for each of the 2021–22, 2022–23, and 2023–24 fiscal years.

This bill requires a selected school district, in consultation with the CDE, to use the funds it receives for both of the following purposes: 1) hiring and funding one distinguished educator with experience in improving pupil performance and outcomes, as specified; and implementing a customized action plan, which must include both of these key considerations—assisting the school district in understanding and developing instructional practices, standards-aligned materials, and pedagogies that are culturally relevant, and professional development opportunities for schoolsite administrators, certificated staff, and classified staff.

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