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## OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 6866

### ***AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EDUCATION.***

#### **SUMMARY**

This bill makes the following unrelated changes to education laws:

1. makes permanent the requirement to proportionately reduce school transportation grants when they are not fully funded (which ends after FY 25 under current law) (§ 1);
2. codifies the State Department of Education's (SDE) Learner Engagement and Attendance Program (LEAP) (§ 2);
3. requires SDE, within available appropriations, to (a) create a fee-waiver grant program to allow high-need students to access advanced courses and (b) pay the State Education Resource Center (SERC) to support school boards in expanding dual credit courses (§ 3);
4. for FY 26, reduces the state's share of the Teacher's Retirement Board's (TRB) retired teacher health insurance costs (§ 4); and
5. eliminates the provision placing the Office of Early Childhood under SDE for administrative purposes only, conforming to current practice (§ 5).

The bill also makes technical and conforming changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2025, except that the (1) LEAP provision is effective July 1, 2026, and (2) retired teachers' health insurance provision is effective upon passage.

#### **§ 2 — LEAP**

Beginning in FY 27, the bill requires SDE, within available

appropriations, to administer the LEAP program and give school boards grants to implement a home visitation program to reduce chronic absenteeism within the school district. In practice, SDE has operated LEAP since 2021. The bill codifies the existing program into statute.

Under the bill, school boards may apply for funds, as the commissioner requires. SDE must give grants to at least 10 school boards in any year it gives out grants, and it must give priority to school districts with the highest levels of chronic absenteeism.

Starting by December 31, 2028, SDE must biennially report on the program's implementation. The report must include an evaluation of the program's success for each grant recipient in either of the two prior fiscal years. SDE may consult with organizations with expertise in reducing absenteeism and increasing student engagement when developing the report.

### **§ 3 — ADVANCED AND DUAL CREDIT COURSES**

Starting in FY 27, the bill charges SDE with administering funds for two programs to support advanced and dual credit courses and programs within available appropriations.

Specifically, the bill requires SDE to create a fee-waiver grant program to expand opportunities for high-need high school students to access advanced courses or programs. School boards may apply to SDE, as the commissioner requires, to be reimbursed for any fees the board is charged for high-need students who enroll in advanced courses or programs (e.g., honors classes, advanced placement (AP) classes, dual enrollment, or dual credit).

The bill also allows SDE to pay SERC up to \$500,000 per fiscal year for programming that directly supports school boards in articulating and expanding dual credit courses. SERC must prioritize alliance districts when spending any funds it receives.

### **§ 4 — RETIRED TEACHERS' HEALTH INSURANCE**

By law, annual premiums for the basic TRB plan are split equally

among (1) the General Fund, (2) the retired teacher, and (3) the retired teachers' health insurance premium account. (The account is funded by active teachers who contribute 1.25% of their salaries to it.) For FY 26, the law reduces the state's share from one-third to 25%.

For retired teachers covered under local board health plans, the law requires the TRB to give the local boards a monthly subsidy to offset retired teachers' local plan premiums. By law, the state General Fund pays one-third of the subsidy and the retired teachers' health insurance premium account generally pays the remainder. For FY 26, the bill reduces the state's contribution to 25%.

### **COMMITTEE ACTION**

#### Education Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute Change of Reference - APP  
Yea 28 Nay 15 (03/28/2025)

#### Appropriations Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute  
Yea 39 Nay 14 (04/24/2025)