
OLR Bill Analysis

sSB 1512

AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE SCHOOL DISTRICT ACCOUNTABILITY REVIEW BOARD AND REQUIRING A FORENSIC AUDIT OF THE BRIDGEPORT PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT.

SUMMARY

This bill establishes the 13-member School District Accountability Review Board (DARB) to assist local or regional boards of education (“school boards”), as identified by the State Board of Education (SBE), with the financial management of the school district and fiscal accountability of the board’s budget. This applies to school boards whose districts are deemed in need of improvement or low-achieving. Current law lists actions the state can take regarding low-achieving school districts and the bill adds to that the option of requiring DARB to assist the district. Under the bill, if a low-achieving school district does not show acceptable progress for two years, then SBE can seek legislation authorizing DARB to take control over the district’s financial operations.

The bill also requires the Auditors of Public Accounts to conduct a forensic audit for FY 26 of the Bridgeport school district’s (1) financial operations and processes and (2) records, accounts, and budget. The auditors must submit the audit and a report on its findings to the Education Committee, which must then hold a hearing on it.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2025, except the Bridgeport audit is effective upon passage.

§ 1 — DARB

Members

The bill places the new board in the education department and requires its members to include the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) secretary and the education commissioner, or their designees,

plus 11 appointed members. The table below shows the appointed members, their appointing authorities, and their qualifications.

Table: DARB Appointed Members

<i>Appointing Authority</i>	<i>Number of Appointments</i>	<i>Appointee Qualification</i>
Governor	Five	One of each of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public school administrator • Public school teacher • Education policy experience • School budget management or school district financial responsibility experience • Experience working in underperforming schools
House speaker	One	Curriculum design and implementation experience
Senate president pro tempore	One	School district intervention creation, implementation, and evaluation experience
House majority leader	One	Experience implementing the guidelines outlined in the state Every Student Succeeds Act (20 U.S.C. § 6301 et seq.) plan submitted to the U.S. Department of Education
Senate majority leader	One	Data analysis experience
House minority leader	One	Education law experience
Senate minority leader	One	Experience working with a school board at the state or local level

Chairs, Terms, and Annual Report

Under the bill, the OPM secretary and the education commissioner, or their designees, serve as the board chairpersons.

Initial board appointments must be made by September 1, 2025. Appointed members serve six-year terms and until a successor is appointed, except that two of the five initial gubernatorial appointments must each be for a three-year term. (The bill does not state which specific appointments must be for three-year terms.) Vacancies must be filled for the remainder of the applicable member's terms. The board members must serve without compensation but be reimbursed for expenses incurred in performing their duties.

Starting by January 1, 2026, the board must develop an annual report on its activities and submit it to the Appropriations and Education committees.

§ 2 — EDUCATION ACCOUNTABILITY LAW

The state’s education accountability law empowers SBE to (1) identify school districts in need of improvement or low-achieving and (2) take certain actions to improve their students’ performance. These actions include, among other things, (1) requiring an operations audit to identify savings and an instructional audit to identify curriculum and instruction problems; (2) requiring the school board to use state and federal funds for critical needs, as directed by SBE; (3) reconstituting schools as charter schools, innovation schools, or other school models for school improvement; or (4) requiring the education commissioner to appoint the superintendent.

The bill also allows SBE to require that DARB provide technical assistance for (1) the school district’s financial management or (2) fiscal accountability for the school board’s budget.

Also, under existing law, if a low-achieving school district does not show acceptable progress for two years as required by SBE, then SBE can seek legislation asking for control of the district to be reassigned to SBE or some other authorized entity. The bill creates another option by allowing SBE to seek legislation authorizing DARB to take control over the district’s financial operations.

§ 3 — FORENSIC AUDIT OF THE BRIDGEPORT SCHOOL DISTRICT

The bill requires the Auditors of Public Accounts to conduct a forensic audit for FY 26 of the Bridgeport school district’s (1) financial operations and processes and (2) records, accounts, and budget. The bill does not define “forensic audit.”

Under the bill, the auditors must conduct the audit under their authority for auditing agencies receiving state grants.

Within 30 days after the audit is complete, the auditors must submit it along with their findings to the Education Committee, which must

hold a hearing on them within 30 days. The committee (1) must invite the education commissioner to present to the committee on the findings and (2) may invite additional individuals to participate at the hearing.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Education Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 41 Nay 3 (03/28/2025)