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sSB-1

AN ACT CONCERNING CHILDHOOD MENTAL AND PHYSICAL
HEALTH SERVICES IN SCHOOLS.

AMENDMENT

LCO No.: 5715

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OFA Fiscal Note

See Fiscal Note Details

Section 1 results in a significant cost to the Office of Early Childhood (OEC) to establish and administer a wage supplement and enhancement grant program for early childhood education program operators and child care services providers, in FY 23.

The cost to the state for such grants is dependent on the parameters of the program, including eligibility requirements, to be established by OEC. The amendment requires that 70% of the appropriation for such grants support operators and providers that do not receive state funding or state financial assistance, and 30% of the appropriation must be used to provide grants to operators and providers that do receive state assistance. Town-based programs could experience a revenue gain associated with such grants. Funding may be used to support programmatic or administrative needs of providers, but priority will be given to those that will use the grant funds exclusively to supplement employee salaries. The grant program could apply to more than 19,000 early child care provider employees.

Section 2 increases the child care center rate for infant and toddler care to \$13,500 in FY 23, resulting in an increased cost of \$7.8 million for existing slots. The amendment also requires OEC to enter into contracts for the purpose of expanding the number of infant and toddler spaces,

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which would also be funded at the new \$13,500 annual rate per slot.

The amendment also results in additional OEC staffing costs of up to \$340,000 (with associated fringe costs of \$137,800) to administer the wage supplement and enhancement grant program as well as support the expansion of infant and toddler seats.

Sections 3-5 result in significant costs to the State Department of Education (SDE) associated with: (1) developing, distributing, and analyzing a survey of each local and regional board of education concerning the employment of school social workers, school psychologists, school counselors and school nurses; and (2) the creation of a grant program to local and regional boards of education associated with hiring and retention of these workers. SDE does not currently have the funding available to complete these requirements.

SDE would require one full time position to implement the survey requirements, resulting in additional personnel costs of \$90,000 and corresponding fringe benefit costs of \$36,477 annually, beginning in FY 23.

The cost of the grant program would depend on the scope of the program, and the amount of each award, but is anticipated to be over \$1 million annually beginning in FY 24, or until the program is no longer operational

Section 6 requires SDE to study the feasibility of creating a temporary human services permit, which results in no fiscal impact as the department has sufficient expertise to carry out the study.

Sections 7-9 authorize a school nurse, or in the absence of a school nurse, a qualified school employee, to maintain opioid antagonists to administer emergency first aid to a student who is experiencing an opioid-related drug overdose. The bill requires a school nurse or principal to select multiple qualified school employees to administer an opioid antagonist, and at least one such employee must be on school grounds during regular school hours when the school nurse is not there.

This could result in additional costs to local and regional school districts, if a school must pay an employee to stay additional hours outside of their normally scheduled hours, to cover the requirements of the bill. The cost to a district would be dependent on the number of hours a school nurse is away during normal school hours and those hours are outside the normal schedule of the qualified employees. The bill allows local and regional school districts to maintain opioid antagonists, which could result in an additional cost associated with purchasing emergency kits of approximately \$22 - \$60 per kit. If a district were to purchase 100 kits, the cost would range from \$2,220 to \$6,000.

Sections 10 and 11 create taskforces and do not result in a fiscal impact.

Section 12 results in a cost to the Department of Public Health to administer a school-based health center expansion grant program in FY 23. It is anticipated that this grant could result in annual costs of approximately \$590,000.

Section 13 results in a potential cost to SDE in FY 23 to provide additional support and assistance to districts participating in the Learner Engagement and Attendance Program (LEAP), as SDE does not currently have the staff or resources available. The potential cost would be dependent upon the scope of the additional support and assistance.

Section 14 results in a potential cost beginning in FY 23 to various local and regional boards of education associated with at least 30 minutes of uninterrupted lunch time for certified staff. The cost would be dependent upon any substitute coverage required to complete the requirements in the amendment.

Section 16 establishes a minority teacher candidate scholarship program for students from priority school districts. This will result in an additional cost to the state beginning in FY 23 as SDE does not have funding available. The scope of the cost would be dependent upon the number of scholarships awarded and the amount per award but is anticipated to be significant.

Sections 17-22 rename the minority teacher recruitment task force and make various procedural, conforming and technical changes that do not result in a fiscal impact.

Section 23 results in a minimal cost to the State Department of Education (SDE) associated with an additional durational part-time staff person in FY 23, with a corresponding salary of approximately \$50,000, to review teacher certification statutes and regulations, and make recommendations on any obsolete provisions and requirements that create a barrier to teacher recruitment and retention. SDE does not currently have the staff available to complete the requirements within the bill.

Section 24 establishes a career and technical pathways instructor permit, which does not have a fiscal impact.

Section 25 allows, beginning with the 2024-25 school year, remote learning for students in grades kindergarten through 12. This could result in a potential cost to local and regional school districts beginning in FY 25 if additional virtual or on-line materials and equipment must be purchased to accommodate students opting to participate in a remote learning model. However, the bill is permissive; local and regional school districts are not mandated to participate.

Section 26 adjusts the responsibilities of the State Education Resource Center (SERC). If the center is not currently providing services in line with its added responsibilities, then there may be an additional cost (dependent on the level of new responsibilities required). This section allows SERC to lease property without the approval of a state agency, which may result in either a savings or cost to SERC.

Section 27 makes Guilford eligible to participate in the Open Choice Program, beginning with the 2022-23 school year. This results in a cost to the state and a corresponding revenue gain to Guilford starting in FY 23. However, it is anticipated that in FY 23, the cost and corresponding revenue gain would be less than \$50,000, and the Open Choice account has the funds available to cover this additional expense.

Section 28 designates the first \$500,000 of excess Open Choice funding for SERC to use to offer professional development to teachers and other school personnel in districts receiving Open Choice students. Additionally, it designates that any such amount over \$500,000 will be used for wrap around services for students participating in the program.

Section 29 establishes the state teacher shortage and retention task force, which is not anticipated to result in a fiscal impact.

Section 30 requires the Department of Correction, in consultation with the SDE, to conduct a study concerning the funding and costs of United School District #1, resulting in no fiscal impact to the state. The agencies have the capacity and expertise to conduct the study.

Section 31 makes a procedural change that does not result in a fiscal impact.

Sections 32-33 adjust the school curriculum beginning July 1, 2025, resulting in a cost to the state and a mandate (cost) to local and regional school districts. The FY 23 budget approved by the Appropriations Committee provides one position (\$100,000 salary and \$40,530 fringe benefits costs) dedicated to inclusion and diversity to aid in this and other related endeavors. Local and regional school districts will experience costs in FY 26 to include this new item in the curriculum. Costs will be dependent upon the size of the district, whether the district already includes the above studies and the extent free existing materials from the Internet and other sources can be used. It is anticipated that no district will experience costs in excess of \$50,000.

The preceding Fiscal Impact statement is prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for the purposes of information, summarization and explanation and does not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose. In general, fiscal impacts are based upon a variety of informational sources, including the analyst's professional knowledge. Whenever applicable, agency data is consulted as part of the analysis, however final products do not necessarily reflect an assessment from any specific department.