



VERMONT LEGISLATIVE
Joint Fiscal Office

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Fiscal Note

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H.486 – An act relating to school construction

As passed by the House of Representatives^{1,2}

Bill Summary

The bill creates a School Construction Aid Task Force to examine, evaluate, and report on issues relating to school construction aid. The bill appropriates funds to hire a school construction expert to assist the task force and requires the task force submit a report with its findings and recommendations for legislative action to the General Assembly.

This bill also unreserves funds that were reserved in the Education Fund for PCB remediation and appropriates those funds to the Agency of Education in fiscal year 2024 to provide grants to schools related to remediation, demolition, and removal of PCB contamination.

Fiscal Impact

This bill appropriates \$200,000 to the Office of the State Treasurer from the General Fund in fiscal year 2024 to hire a school construction expert to assist the School Construction Aid Task Force created in the bill.

For per diem payments and reimbursement of expenses paid for participation in the School Construction Aid Task Force, JFO estimates per diem payments and reimbursement expenses for this task force will cost approximately \$12,500, and these costs will be absorbed by both the General Assembly and State Treasurer's office budgets.

This bill also unreserves \$29.5 million that was reserved in the Education Fund in Act 178 (2022) and appropriates those funds to the Agency of Education in fiscal year 2024 to provide grants to schools related to remediation, demolition, and removal of PCB contamination.

Background and Details

The following sections have a fiscal impact.

Section 1

Section 1 creates the School Construction Aid Task Force to examine, evaluate, and report on issues relating to school construction aid.

¹ Original Bill: <https://legislature.vermont.gov/Documents/2024/Docs/BILLS/H-0486/H-0486%20As%20Introduced.pdf>

² Passed Amendment:

<https://legislature.vermont.gov/Documents/2024/WorkGroups/House%20Appropriations/Bills/H.486/Drafts.%20Amendments.%20and%20Legal%20Documents/H.486~Michael%20O'Grady~HAC%20Amendment~3-24-2023.pdf>

The task force would consist of four legislative members and 12 other members. The bill entitles the two legislators serving on the task force to receive per diems and reimbursement of expenses for up to ten meetings. These expenses would be paid for with monies appropriated to the General Assembly. JFO estimates this will result in a fiscal impact of approximately \$9,000. The bill also entitles members of the task force that are not serving ex officio or otherwise employed by the State to receive per diem payments and reimbursement of expenses for up to ten meetings. These expenses would be paid for with monies appropriated to the Office of the State Treasurer. JFO estimates this will result in a fiscal impact of approximately \$3,500.

The bill also appropriates \$200,000 to the Office of the State Treasurer from the General Fund in fiscal year 2024 to hire a school construction expert to assist the School Construction Aid Task Force.

Section 2

Section 2 pauses the PCB testing program and directs the Agency of Natural Resources to not initiate testing for PCBs at any school until the report from the School Construction Aid Task Force has been submitted and the General Assembly approves further testing.

This section also directs any funds remaining from the appropriation to the Agency of Natural Resources for PCB testing of schools to revert to the Education Fund and held in reserve for future school construction needs.

Section 2 also unreserves \$29.5 million that was reserved in the Education Fund for the purposes of investigation, remediation, and removal of PCBs.

In November 2022, the Emergency Board transferred \$2.5 million to the Agency of Education for immediate action to reduce PCB exposure in schools. Section 2 reverts the remaining unexpended and unobligated funds from the Emergency Board transfer back to the Education Fund for further allocation.

Section 2 appropriates the reverted funds and unreserved \$29.5 million from the Education Fund to the Agency of Education in fiscal year 2024 to provide grants to schools related to remediation, demolition, and removal of PCB contamination. These grants are to provide 100 percent reimbursement for schools' remediation or removal costs or to make schools whole for the costs of remediation or removal if they already had a portion of their costs covered from the Agency of Natural Resources. Up to \$16 million shall be used to reimburse the Burlington School District for demolition and removal costs related to PCB contamination at Burlington High School.