

H.521

An act relating to amending the special education laws

It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

Sec 1. PURPOSE

2018 Acts and Resolves No. 173 made substantial changes to the funding of special education services and directed the Agency of Education to assist supervisory unions in adopting best practices for the delivery of special education services. This act makes certain minor amendments to the special education laws that are proposed by the Agency of Education to clarify some of the changes made in Act 173.

Sec. 2. 16 V.S.A. § 2961 is amended to read:

§ 2961. CENSUS GRANT

(a) As used in this section:

* * *

(3) “Long-term membership” of a supervisory union in any school year means the average of the supervisory union’s average daily membership over the most recent three school years for which data are available.

(4) “Uniform base amount” means an amount determined by:

(A) dividing an amount:

(i) equal to the average State appropriation for fiscal years 2018, 2019, and 2020 for special education under sections 2961 (standard

mainstream block grants), 2963 (special education expenditures reimbursement), and 2963a (exceptional circumstances) of this title; and

(ii) increased by the annual change in the National Income and Product Accounts (NIPA) Implicit Price Deflator for State and Local Government Consumption Expenditures and Gross Investment as reported by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis; by

(B) the statewide ~~average daily membership for prekindergarten through grade 12 for the 2019–2020 school year~~ long-term membership.

* * *

Sec. 3. 16 V.S.A. § 2967 is amended to read:

§ 2967. AID PROJECTION

(a) On or before December 15, the Secretary shall publish an estimate, by each supervisory union, of its anticipated State special education ~~expenditures~~ funding under this chapter for the ensuing school year.

(b) As used in this section, State special education ~~expenditures~~ funding shall include:

(1) ~~costs~~ funds eligible for grants and reimbursements under sections 2961 and 2962 of this title;

(2) ~~costs~~ funds for services for persons who are visually impaired;

(3) ~~costs~~ funds for persons who are deaf or hard of hearing;

(4) ~~costs~~ funds for the interdisciplinary team program;

(5) funds expended for training and programs to meet the needs of students with emotional or behavioral challenges under subsection 2969(c) of this title; and

(6) funds expended for training under subsection 2969(d) of this title.

Sec. 4. 16 V.S.A. § 2975 is amended to read:

§ 2975. UNUSUAL SPECIAL EDUCATION COSTS; FINANCIAL
ASSISTANCE

The Secretary may use ~~up to two percent of the funds appropriated for allowable special education expenditures, as that term is defined in State Board of Education rules, to directly assist supervisory unions with special education expenditures of an unusual or unexpected nature~~ funds for allowable special education expenditures, as defined in State Board of Education rules, to directly assist supervisory unions with special education expenditures of an unusual or unexpected nature. These funds shall be appropriated in the amount of two percent times the Census Grant as defined in section 2961 of this title.

The Secretary's decision regarding a supervisory union's eligibility for and amount of assistance shall be final.

Sec. 5. 2018 Acts and Resolves No. 173, Sec. 17 is amended to read:

Sec. 17. TRANSITION

(a) Notwithstanding the requirement under 16 V.S.A. § 2964 for a supervisory union to submit a service plan to the Secretary of Education,

a supervisory union shall not be required to submit a service plan for fiscal year 2021.

(b) On or before November 1, 2019, a supervisory union shall submit to the Secretary such information as required:

(1) by the Secretary to estimate the supervisory union's projected fiscal year 2021 extraordinary special education reimbursement under Sec. 5 of this act; and

(2) for IDEA reporting in a format specified by the Secretary.

(c) The Agency of Education shall assist supervisory unions as they transition to the census-based funding model in satisfying their maintenance of effort requirements under federal law.

Sec. 6. EFFECTIVE DATES

Secs. 1, 5, and this section shall take effect on passage. Secs. 2–4 shall take effect on July 1, 2020.