

Vermont Legislative Joint Fiscal Office

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FISCAL NOTE

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H.426 An act relating to addressing the needs and conditions of public school facilities in the State – as passed by the Senate

Summary

- (1) Appropriates \$2.5 million to the Agency of Education (AOE) for a school facilities inventory and conditions assessment to inform AOE of statewide school facilities needs and costs;
- (2) Appropriates \$500,000 to AOE to contract with an independent third party to help school districts improve the health and safety of school facilities as a result of the pandemic;
- (3) Appropriates \$1.0 million to AOE for allocation to school districts that need additional funding to improve the health and safety of the district's facilities.
- (4) Establishes the Renewable and Efficiency Heating Systems Grant Program to award funds to public and approved independent schools with source of funding pending further action in the 2022 legislative session.
- (5) Requires each public school to perform a radon measurement on any facility that has not had a test completed in five or more years on or before January 15, 2023.

Section 3 – Requires the Secretary of Education (Secretary) to contract with an independent third party to conduct a public school facilities inventory and conditions assessment to ascertain the extent of need for additional support to school districts as a result of the pandemic and other causes. The inventory is to be completed on or before January 15, 2022 and the conditions assessment is to be completed by October 1, 2022.

Authorizes the use of not more than \$2.5 million of the amount allocated to AOE from the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund pursuant to the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ESSER-ARPA).

Section 9 – Requires the Secretary to contract with an independent third party to assist any school district to improve the overall health and safety of any school district's facilities.

Authorizes the Secretary to allocate not more than \$500,000 of the amount allocated to AOE from ESSER-ARPA to hire a consultant to assist school in using ESSER III funds allocated to schools to improve the overall health and safety of any district's school facilities as a result of the pandemic.

Provides that not more than \$1.0 million of the amount allocated to AOE from ESSER-ARPA shall be reserved for school districts that have used all the federal funds allocated to school districts under ARPA and that need additional funding to plan and implement improvements to its facilities.

Section 11 – Establishes the Renewable and Efficiency Heating Systems Grant Program to award funds to public and approved independent schools. Grant awards shall be used to cover not more than 50 percent of the total cost for the improvement or repair of existing heating systems or for the cost of the installation of renewable or efficiency electric space heating and conditioning systems.

Provides that, during the 2022 legislative session, the General Assembly shall determine the source of funding. Authorizes Efficiency Vermont to use up to \$150,000 of the amount appropriated to the program for direct labor costs.

Section 12 – Requires each public school to perform a radon measurement in accordance with established protocols on any facility that has not had a test completed in five or more years on or before January 15, 2023.

Radon testing would be an unfunded mandate on school districts that have not completed radon testing within the past five years. The total cost of radon testing in all public schools, which includes the cost of radon testing kits and monitors as well as labor costs, would be roughly \$900,000. See the fiscal analysis below.

Note that 57 schools that have completed radon testing since the beginning of the 2016-2017 school year at no cost through the Vermont Department of Health would already be in compliance with this mandate.

Radon Testing Mandate in H.426 as passed by Senate

				Schools	
	<u>Schools</u>	<u>Labor/hour</u>	<u>Hours</u>	All	Public
Labor	450	\$95	15	\$641,000	
	320	\$95	15		\$456,000
Kits	<u>Schools</u>	<u>Cost/kit</u>			
	450	\$1,080		\$486,000	
	320	\$1,080			\$346,000
Monitors	<u>Schools</u>	<u>Cost/monitors</u>			
	450	\$350		\$158,000	
	320	\$350			\$112,000
		<u>Labor/hour</u>	<u>Hours</u>		
		\$95	450	\$43,000	
		\$95	320		\$30,000
Other potential costs*					
Communications staff				\$40,000	\$0
Radon program staff				\$130,000	\$0
IT portal				\$50,000	\$0
Total cost				\$1,500,000	\$ 900,000
Average cost per school every five years				\$3,300	\$2,800

* As passed by the Senate, H.427 does not mandate the hiring of additional staff or creation of an IT portal.