



HOUSE BILL 199: Permanent Charter School Transportation Grant.

2019-2020 General Assembly

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| Committee: | House Education - K-12. If favorable, re-refer to Appropriations, Education. If favorable, re-refer to Appropriations. If favorable, re-refer to Rules, Calendar, and Operations of the House | Date: | April 9, 2019 |
| Introduced by: | Reps. Hardister, Saine, Iler, Brockman | Prepared by: | Kara McCraw Committee Counsel |
| Analysis of: | First Edition | | |

OVERVIEW: *HB 199 would create a permanent charter school transportation grant program that provides reimbursement to charter schools for transportation costs if at least half of that charter school's population qualifies for the federal school lunch program. HB 199 also appropriates \$2,500,000 in recurring funds for this program.*

BACKGROUND: The 2017 budget (S.L. 2017-57, Sec. 7.35), established a charter school transportation grant pilot program (pilot). The pilot awarded funds to qualifying charter schools to reimburse 65% of the eligible student transportation costs incurred by the school each semester, up to \$100,000. Eligible student transportation costs are costs incurred by the charter school for (i) transportation fuel, (ii) vehicle maintenance, and (iii) contracted transportation services. To qualify, a charter school had to have a student enrollment of at least fifty percent (50%) of its students residing in households with an income level not in excess of the amount required for a student to qualify for the federal free or reduced price lunch program in a semester of the school year. The Department of Public Instruction was required to report by March 15, 2018 on the pilot program outcomes, including (i) the number of charter schools that received grant funds, (ii) the amount of grant funds awarded, (iii) whether implementing the Program led to an increase in charter schools offering lunch, (iv) whether implementing the Program led to an increase in student lunch participation at charter schools offering lunch, (v) whether implementing the Program increased or expanded the offering of student transportation by charter schools, and (vi) the modes of student transportation offered by charter schools that received grant funds. A follow up was required by S.L. 2018-5, Sec. 7.19, to be submitted by December 1, 2018. The initial report can be found [here](#), and the follow-up report can be found [here](#). The report found the following:

"A majority of schools not already providing lunch to all students reported that lunch provision and participation increased after receiving the Charter School Transportation Grant. Additionally, transportation offerings were expanded at 85% of charter schools that received reimbursement who did not already provide transportation to all students. The primary mode of transportation provided by charter schools was self-operated bus transportation.

Without a more detailed analysis, we are unable to definitively state that the grant led to an increase in lunch provision and participation for lower-income populations in eligible charter schools. The results displayed here indicate self-reported results from grant recipient schools. This data provides some evidence of the grant's effect, but a causal link cannot be established without an in-depth statistical report."

BILL ANALYSIS: HB 199 would create a permanent charter school transportation grant program (program) to award grant funds to qualifying charter schools to reimburse up to sixty five percent (65%) of the eligible student transportation costs, with a limit of \$100,000 per grant. Eligible student

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transportation costs would be costs incurred by the charter school for (i) transportation fuel, (ii) vehicle maintenance, (iii) contracted transportation services, and (iv) transportation personnel salaries. A charter school would be eligible for the grants if the school's student enrollment in the semester was at least 50% either:

1. Residing in households with an income level not in excess of the amount required for a student to qualify for the federal free or reduced price lunch program, or
2. Qualifying as "identified students" under the Community Eligibility Provision of the Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act of 2010.

The Department of Public Instruction (DPI) would establish criteria and guidelines for the grant applications by August 1 annually. Applications would be accepted by DPI until December 31 for costs incurred during the fall semester and until May 15 for costs incurred during the spring semester. From funds available for the program, DPI would award grants for the fall semester by February 15, and grants for the spring semester by June 15.

DPI would report annually by March 15 of each year in which funds are awarded to the Fiscal Research Division, the Joint Legislative Transportation Oversight Committee, and the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee on the administration of the Program, including (i) the number of charter schools that received grant funds, (ii) the amount of grant funds awarded to those charter schools, (iii) whether implementing the Program has led to an increase in charter schools offering lunch, (iv) whether implementing the Program has led to an increase in student lunch participation at charter schools offering lunch, (v) whether implementing the Program has increased or expanded the offering of student transportation by charter schools, and (vi) the modes of student transportation offered by charter schools that received grant funds.

HB 199 would appropriate \$2,500,000 in recurring funds, beginning with the 2019-2020 fiscal year, to DPI to operate the charter school transportation grant program.

EFFECTIVE DATE: HB 199 would become effective July 1, 2019, and would apply beginning with the 2019-2020 school year.