

HOUSE RESEARCH

Bill Summary

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Subject: Telecommunication and Internet access aid

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Overview

This bill creates a state aid for school districts, charter schools and nonpublic schools to reimburse the schools for a portion of their unreimbursed costs for telecommunications and Internet access. For public schools, the aid is equal to 90% of the amount of unreimbursed costs exceeding \$15 per pupil. For nonpublic schools, the aid is equal to 90% of the amount of unreimbursed costs exceeding \$10 per pupil unit (in fiscal year 2001, the basic operating capital revenue for school districts was increased by \$5 per pupil unit and for three years this revenue was required to be used for telecommunications costs).

For fiscal years 2001 to 2003, the state had a similar program in place called the Telecommunications Access Revenue Program (TARP). Preliminary data suggests this new program will cost roughly \$5.5 million per year.

Section

- 1** **Telecommunications/Internet access aid.** Requires school districts and charter schools to submit their actual telecommunications and Internet access costs to the commissioner of education. Defines eligible costs. Requires participating districts to file applications for federal Internet funds commonly referred to as e-rate funds. Sets the aid under this section for school districts and charter schools equal to 90% of the schools' unreimbursed costs exceeding \$15 per pupil unit. Requires a school district to provide telecommunications and Internet access to nonpublic schools (excluding a home school) located within the district's boundaries. Provides a reimbursement equal to 90% of the nonpublic school's unreimbursed

Section

costs exceeding \$10 per pupil unit. Makes the nonpublic school responsible for any costs in excess of the amount the district receives for this service. Provides a severability clause that states if a court finds any portion of this statute unconstitutional, the court may sever that provision, and the remaining portions of the statute remain in effect.

2 Payment percentage for reimbursement aids. Adds the new aid created in section 1 to the list of state aids that are 100% paid in the year in which the revenue is due (most school aid entitlements are paid 80% in the current year and 20% in the following year).

3 Appropriations. Appropriates an unspecified amount of state aid in fiscal year 2005 from the general fund to the commissioner of education for payment of telecommunications/Internet access aid.