



WISCONSIN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL STAFF MEMORANDUM

Memo No. 5

TO: MEMBERS OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON SCHOOL SAFETY

FROM: Melissa Schmidt, Staff Attorney, and Russ Whitesel, Senior Staff Attorney

RE: Department of Public Instruction School Safety Grant Options

DATE: November 5, 2008

At its October 7, 2008 meeting, the Special Committee on School Safety heard testimony regarding the Department of Public Instruction's (DPI) budget proposal, which included a school safety grant. The purpose of this Memo is to briefly describe DPI's budget proposal as it relates to this grant and then set forth potential options the committee may decide to undertake.

SCHOOL SAFETY GRANT PROPOSAL

Background

As part of its 2009-11 Biennial Budget Request, DPI requested \$5 million for school safety grants. DPI distributed the portion of its budget describing the grant program at the October 7, 2008 committee meeting. It also requested \$250,000 for administration of the grant program, related training, and technical assistance services. DPI explained that currently there is only one source of federal funding schools may use to pay for safety-related expenses, the federal Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities Act (SDFSCA). As part of the No Child Left Behind legislation dating back to 2001, SDFSCA originally provided \$5.4 million annually to Wisconsin schools. The President's proposal for 2009 funding is down however, to \$1,758,500, a 75% decrease from 2001. DPI's school safety grant proposal is designed to off-set this loss of funding to Wisconsin schools.

Enclosed is the budget drafting request excerpted from DPI's budget proposal, describing this proposed safety grant. DPI's proposal is to distribute the \$5 million through competitive grants, starting in fiscal year 2011. The purpose is to prevent violence, respond to emergencies, manage crises, and recover from major safety-related events. In the budget drafting request, DPI states that schools could use the grant funding for:

- Safety personnel, including safety officers.
- Pupil services staff with clinical licenses.
- Materials for suicide prevention.
- Mental health materials.
- Training for staff.
- Contract services.
- Costs of security equipment, including, but not limited to:
 - Surveillance cameras.
 - Communication systems (including walkie-talkies).
 - Enhanced fencing and lighting.
 - Threat assessment costs using the Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design System.

[2009-11 Biennial Budget Request, Department of Public Instruction, p. 170.]

DPI explained that based on this list of criteria, it would create rules for grant applicants so that the grant would fund the following activities:

- Youth suicide prevention (i.e. developmentally appropriate instruction, targeted services for pupils in high-risk groups, more intensive services for pupils demonstrated to be high-risk, etc.).
- School-based mental health service expansion (i.e. mental health screenings, threat and risk assessments, referrals to community mental health providers, etc.).
- Truancy, suspensions, and expulsions reduction (i.e. implementing consistent school rules, counseling and supportive interventions, monitoring programs, etc.).
- Developmentally appropriate drug and violence prevention strategies (i.e. support groups for anger management or recovering youth, individual screening, maintenance of services to expelled services, referral to community service providers, parental education, professional development, etc.).
- Law enforcement and security activities (i.e. school resource officers, security equipment, enhanced fencing and lighting, etc.).
- Emergency intervention following traumatic events (i.e. personnel, materials and contracts for services, staff development, etc.).

[2009-11 Biennial Budget Request, Department of Public Instruction, pp. 48-52.]

DPI's school safety grant proposal, located in its 2009-11 budget request, may or may not be included in the Governor's 2009-11 biennial budget, which is announced in January. The Governor has the authority to recommend DPI's budget request in its entirety, make changes to portions of the budget, or to deny the request.

Options

1. Prepare a bill draft to create a school safety grant program based on DPI's proposal, with the possible addition of modifications:
 - a. Allow Cooperative Educational Service Agencies (CESA) to apply for the school safety grants.
 - b. Allow multi-school district applications for grant funding.
 - c. Allow anti-bullying programs or anger management, impulse control, and conflict-resolution curriculum to be eligible for grant funding.
 - d. Allow local consortia established to coordinate mental health services and activities to be eligible for grant funding.
 - e. Allow parent advisory planning groups created to address school safety issues to be eligible for grant funding.
 - f. Allow materials distributed to parents regarding effective parenting in an effort to curb bullying, teasing, and harassment in schools may be eligible for grant funding.
 - g. Allow materials designed to improve the school climate (e.g. school values, behavioral expectations, etc.) to be eligible for grant funding.
 - h. Clarify the criteria to be used in awarding grants, and any maximum or minimum grant amounts.
 - i. Specify the length of the grant and any reporting requirements.
2. Consider expanding the scope of the school safety grant program to support the designation and operation of a school safety center. In connection with this expansion, consider whether additional funding would be appropriate (beyond the \$5.25 million), and what criteria would be used by DPI in making the grant for such a center.
3. Consider expanding the scope of the program to allow grant funds to be used to defray some or all of the costs of an annual school safety conference. In connection with this alternative, consider whether additional funding would be appropriate and what criteria would be used by DPI in awarding a grant for this purpose.
4. Prepare a bill draft creating DPI's school safety grant program, making no modifications to DPI's proposal.
5. Make no recommendations relating to DPI's proposed school safety grant program.

MS:RW:ty

Enclosure