

Fiscal Note & Local Impact Statement

123rd General Assembly of Ohio

BILL: H.B. 487 DATE: January 10, 2000
STATUS: As Introduced SPONSOR: Rep. Smith
LOCAL IMPACT STATEMENT REQUIRED: No — Minimal Cost
CONTENTS: To require the Director of the Department of Human Services to establish a truancy prevention pilot program in certain municipal school districts

State Fiscal Highlights

STATE FUND	FY 2000	FY 2001	FUTURE YEARS
General Revenue Fund			
Revenues	- 0 -	- 0 -	- 0 -
Expenditures	Increase around \$20,000	Increase between \$33,000 and \$41,500	Increase between \$33,000 and \$41,500

Note: The state fiscal year is July 1 through June 30. For example, FY 2000 is July 1, 1999 – June 30, 2000.

- Establishing a truancy reduction pilot project within the Department of Human (ODHS) will require the addition of at least one social worker as well as additional program administration costs. ODHS expenditures will increase by a minimum of \$33,000 annually. LBO assumes the single position will be housed within an existing ODHS office.

Local Fiscal Highlights

LOCAL GOVERNMENT	FY 2000	FY 2001	FUTURE YEARS
Counties			
Revenues	- 0 -	- 0 -	- 0 -
Expenditures	Potential negligible increase	Potential negligible increase	Potential negligible increase
Municipal School Districts			
Revenues	- 0 -	- 0 -	- 0 -
Expenditures	Potential negligible increase	Potential negligible increase	Potential negligible increase

Note: For most local governments, the fiscal year is the calendar year. The school district fiscal year is July 1 through June 30.

- County juvenile court divisions and municipal school districts may experience a negligible increase in expenditures associated with the implementation of the truancy reduction program, however the reallocation of existing staff including principals, school intervention officers and others may satisfy the requirements of the bill.



Detailed Fiscal Analysis

Provisions of the Bill. The bill requires the Director of the Ohio Department of Human Services (ODHS) to establish a pilot truancy prevention program in three to five elementary schools in each municipal school district. As defined in ORC 3321.40, the Cleveland Public School District is the only “municipal school district” in Ohio. The Director is to work in conjunction with the municipal school district, the public children services agency, the juvenile court and appropriate county prosecutor. The Director is required to assign staff to administer and implement the pilot program.

Specifically, the bill requires the ODHS Director to examine the Student Mediation and Reduction of Truancy (SMART) program operating under the direction of the Franklin County Domestic Court and Juvenile Branch in fiscal year 1999 and to develop program guidelines and implementation plans modeled on the SMART program. The truancy prevention program to be piloted under the bill must ensure that counseling is provided for children who demonstrate a pattern of unexcused absences and their families. The counseling is to include the school principal, and other staff designated by the school principal and the appropriate juvenile court, and must include an examination of the underlying reasons for the students non-attendance; a psychological assessment of the child; referrals to appropriate community agencies; and a discussion of the possible criminal and other consequences of the student’s non-attendance.

The Franklin County Juvenile Court initiated the SMART program in 1997 as an early intervention program aimed at addressing truancy at the elementary level in the Columbus Public Schools (CPS). The program involves three CPS elementary schools—West Broad, Sullivant, and Burroughs—but is expected to expand to five CPS schools and as many as five schools in the Reynoldsburg Public School District. SMART relies on school officials to identify children who demonstrate a pattern of unexcused absences and to arrange for a conference with the student and his/her family. At this conference, the school principal and a court worker, and often a court-appointed special advocate or interested teacher, meet with the family and review the student’s record of attendance, outline the consequences of truancy in the law, and discuss factors that contribute to the pattern of unexcused absences, referring the family to community services as appropriate. The student’s attendance is tracked by SMART staff for the remainder of the school year, leading possibly to further court intervention and a referral for criminal indictment to the county prosecutor. In school year 1998-1999, 279 families entered the SMART program; attendance rates improved in 78 percent of the cases and the court pursued formal intervention in the remaining 22 percent of cases.

Costs of Franklin County’s SMART Program. Because the bill essentially directs ODHS to replicate the Franklin County program in the Cleveland School District, the following figures concerning SMART program costs may be considered illustrative. The SMART initiative has not been separately budgeted by the county court, which uses part of the staff time of three existing employees to conduct the counseling, tracking, referral, and administrative management involved in the program. SMART officials projected a start-up budget of \$250,000, which included three school intervention officers, a project coordinator/supervisor and necessary office supplies and office capital, with capacity

for 15 schools. The costs could be larger or smaller depending upon which and how many schools are chosen to participate in the pilot and the number of truant students involved.

However, the program outlined in the bill would likely be housed within an existing ODHS office and can only be piloted at three to five elementary schools. SMART officials estimate that one full-time staff person would be able to carry out their program at five elementary schools, depending upon school size and the extent of the truancy problem at the selected schools. Assuming an entry-level Human Services 1, 2 or 3 position and factoring benefits at 30 percent of gross salary, the program would cost \$33,000 - \$41,500. Additional staff time and administrative expense may be required of the elementary school staff and court staff, however the reallocation of existing staff including principals, school intervention officers and others may satisfy the demands imposed by the implementation of the truancy prevention pilot program in the bill.

□ *LBO Staff: Eric J. Karolak, Budget/Policy Analyst*

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