

2019 Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 446

BY REPRESENTATIVE STEVE CARTER

Prefiled pursuant to Article III, Section 2(A)(4)(b)(i) of the Constitution of Louisiana.

STUDENT/LOANS-SCHOLARSHIP: Provides for a voucher program for certain public school students

1 AN ACT

2 To enact Part III of Chapter 43 of Title 17 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes of 1950, to be
3 comprised of R.S. 17:4031.1, relative to reading assistance for certain public school
4 students; to establish the Reading Assistance Program; to provide for student and
5 service provider eligibility, program administration, payment amounts and uses,
6 notifications, reports, and funding; and to provide for related matters.

7 Be it enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana:

8 Section 1. Part III of Chapter 43 of Title 17 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes of
9 1950, comprised of R.S. 17:4031.1, is hereby enacted to read as follows:

10 PART III. READING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

11 §4031.1. Reading Assistance Program; establishment; student eligibility; service
12 provider eligibility and approval; administration; payment amounts and uses;
13 notifications; reports; funding

14 A. The Reading Assistance Program, hereafter in this Part referred to as the
15 "program", is hereby established for the purpose of providing supplemental
16 educational services for eligible students.

17 B. A student who is enrolled in a public school in the third, fourth, or fifth
18 grade and scores below mastery in English language arts on the state assessment in
19 the prior school year is an eligible student.

20

1 C. The state Department of Education shall administer and provide for the
2 implementation of the program pursuant to rules and regulations developed and
3 adopted for such purpose by the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education
4 in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act.

5 D. In administering the program, the department shall:

6 (1) Determine student eligibility for the program.

7 (2) Develop and accept applications from parents or legal guardians of
8 eligible students.

9 (3) Establish eligibility criteria for and procedures for the approval of
10 providers of supplemental educational services.

11 (4) Remit program payments on behalf of eligible students with the lowest
12 performing economically disadvantaged students given the highest priority.

13 (5) Notify the governing authority of each public school of the application
14 process, requirements, and deadlines for parents and legal guardians.

15 (6) Define "supplemental educational services" for purposes of this Section.

16 E. By not later than September thirtieth each year, each public school
17 governing authority shall notify the parent or legal guardian of each student in grades
18 three through five who is enrolled in a school under its jurisdiction and who scored
19 below mastery in English language arts on the state assessment in the prior school
20 year of the process for applying for a program payment pursuant to Paragraph (D)(5)
21 of this Section.

22 F.(1) The amount of each program payment shall be five hundred dollars,
23 and shall be used for supplemental educational services that are designed to improve
24 reading or literacy skills and are provided to the eligible student by an approved
25 provider.

26 (2) The department shall remit program payments to approved providers on
27 behalf of eligible students in accordance with time lines determined by the
28 department.

1 (3) Any expenses above the amount paid on behalf of an eligible student
2 shall be the responsibility of the parent or legal guardian.

3 G. The department shall submit a report to the House Committee on
4 Education and the Senate Committee on Education by not later than April thirtieth
5 each year regarding the implementation of the program. The report shall include, at
6 a minimum, the following information for that year:

7 (1) The total number of students on whose behalf program payments were
8 remitted.

9 (2) The public schools in which such students are enrolled and the number
10 of students on whose behalf program payments were remitted in each school.

11 (3) The total dollar amount of program payments remitted to approved
12 providers.

13 (4) A list of the approved providers to which program payments were
14 remitted on behalf of eligible students and the supplemental educational services
15 provided to each eligible student.

16 H. Implementation of the program is subject to the appropriation of funds for
17 such purpose.

DIGEST

The digest printed below was prepared by House Legislative Services. It constitutes no part of the legislative instrument. The keyword, one-liner, abstract, and digest do not constitute part of the law or proof or indicia of legislative intent. [R.S. 1:13(B) and 24:177(E)]

HB 446 Reengrossed

2019 Regular Session

Steve Carter

Abstract: Provides for a voucher program for public school students in 3rd through 5th grade who score below mastery in English language arts on state assessments.

Proposed law establishes the Reading Assistance Program for eligible students. Defines "eligible student" as a student who is enrolled in a public school in the third, fourth, or fifth grade and who scored below mastery in English language arts on the state assessment in the prior school year. Gives priority to the lowest performing economically disadvantaged students.

Proposed law provides that the amount of the program payment is \$500 to be remitted to approved providers on behalf of each eligible student to provide supplemental educational services designed to improve reading or literacy skills.

Proposed law requires the state Dept. of Education to administer the program pursuant to rules and regulations adopted by the State Bd. of Elementary and Secondary Education. Requires the department to:

- (1) Determine student eligibility.
- (2) Develop and accept applications from parents of eligible students.
- (3) Establish eligibility criteria for and procedures for the approval of providers of supplemental educational services.
- (4) Notify public school governing authorities of the application process, requirements, and deadlines for parents and legal guardians.
- (5) Define "supplemental educational services" for purposes of the program.
- (6) Annually report to the House and Senate education committees on the implementation of the program.

Requires public school governing authorities to notify the parents or legal guardians of eligible students of the program application process.

Specifies that any expenses above the amount of the program payment shall be the responsibility of the parent or legal guardian.

Provides that program implementation is subject to the appropriation of funds.

(Adds R.S. 17:4031.1)

Summary of Amendments Adopted by House

The House Floor Amendments to the engrossed bill:

1. Change the name of the program from the "Reading Scholarship Program" to the "Reading Assistance Program".
2. Specify that the lowest performing economically disadvantaged students shall be given highest priority.
3. Delete requirement that reading scholarships be given on a first-come, first-served basis giving preference to eligible students classified as English Language Learners.
4. Provide that payments are remitted to providers of supplemental educational services instead of to parents of eligible students.
5. Delete list of eligible services that parents would have been allowed to choose.
6. Require the state Dept. of Education to establish eligibility criteria and approval procedures for the providers.
7. Require the department to define "supplemental educational services".
8. Require the department to annually submit to the House and Senate education committees a list of approved providers to which program payments were remitted and the supplemental educational services provided to each eligible student.

9. Expand the program to eligible students in public schools under the jurisdiction of all public school governing authorities instead of only those under local public school boards.