



Ohio Legislative Service Commission

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Fiscal Note & Local Impact Statement

Bill: H.B. 299 of the 131st G.A.

Date: November 10, 2015

Status: As Reported by House Education

Sponsor: Reps. Blessing and Rezabek

Local Impact Statement Procedure Required: No

Contents: Permits the custodian of a qualified child to apply for the Autism Scholarship Program

State Fiscal Highlights

- The bill permits temporary, legal, or permanent custodians of children identified with autism to apply for the Autism Scholarship Program. If this results in students obtaining the scholarship who would have otherwise attended nonpublic programs without a scholarship, state funding may increase.

Local Fiscal Highlights

- School districts will have the scholarship amount, which is the lesser of alternative provider tuition or \$27,000, deducted from their state aid for each additional resident district student who obtains a scholarship due to the bill.
- Districts may also experience a decrease in expenditures due to educating fewer students.

Detailed Fiscal Analysis

The Autism Scholarship Program provides autistic students in grades K-12 who have received an individualized education program (IEP) with scholarships to attend an alternative public or private provider. The bill expands the Autism Scholarship Program to allow temporary, legal, or permanent custodians of children identified with autism to apply for a scholarship. Under current law, only natural and adoptive parents of qualified children may apply for the scholarship. The scholarship amount paid is the lesser of the tuition charged by the provider or \$27,000.

Under continuing law, Autism Scholarship students are counted in their resident districts' average daily membership for funding purposes. Funding for the student, however, is deducted from the district's calculated state funding allocation and paid to the alternative provider. If more students participate in the program as a result of the bill, deductions from school districts will increase. Districts may also experience a decrease in expenditures due to educating fewer students, depending on the number of custodians who apply for the scholarship.

Because the scholarship amount is deducted from a district's state funding allocation, an increase in the number of scholarship students generally will have no direct fiscal effect on the state. A possible exception to this, however, is if a student would have attended a nonpublic school even without the scholarship. In these instances, state funding may be higher than otherwise as the number of publicly funded students would be higher.

In FY 2015, a total of \$51.5 million was deducted from the state funding allocations of 405 school districts to fund the Autism Scholarship Program.