

## **Task Force on Pupil Weighting**

### **Proposed Categorical Aid Program for English Language Learners**

#### **1. Background**

- In most Vermont schools, English language learner (ELL) programs are limited in both scale and scope; some districts have no ELLs
- Pupil weights derived from the models for ELLs are less reliable than the weights derived for other cost factors
- Categorical aid programs are generally used to provide additional aid to districts for specific purposes:
  - Federal categorical aid is available for ELL programs in all states
  - Six states provide categorical aid for ELL programs
- In Vermont, statewide expenditures for ELL programs were \$7.8 million in FY2020 for approximately 1,800 ELLs – excluding federal aid
- ELL cost per ELL vary widely across districts indicating that the needs of ELLs are not being addressed equitably
- A targeted categorical aid program could help ensure that the needs of all ELLs are met by directing state funds to cover costs related to the provision ELL services
- Stakeholders indicated that, in some cases, new targeted categorical aid programs were preferable to adjustments to the cost factors or weights used in the equalized pupil calculation

#### **2. Current Law**

- Differences in the cost of ELL program across districts are addressed through pupil weighting:
  - ELLs receive an additional weight of 0.20
  - ELLs are also included in the measure of poverty

### 3. Proposal

- Implement the program beginning in FY2024
- Provide categorical aid for ELLs:
  - \$25,000 base grant for every district with at least one ELL
  - An additional \$5,000 grant per ELL for every district
- Inflate the \$5,000 per-ELL grants annually to account for inflation
- Allow broad and flexible use of grants by districts:
  - Instructional and support personnel (teachers, paraprofessionals, translators, cultural liaisons);
  - Instructional materials (books, digital resources);
  - Family support and education;
  - Community outreach and engagement
- Repeal the current law:
  - Repeal 0.20 weight for ELLs
  - Remove ELLs from the measure of students in poverty

### 4. Statewide Cost Estimate

Using FY2022 data, the statewide cost of this program is estimated to be about \$11.2 million. These funds would be appropriated from the Education Fund.

69 districts with ELLs x \$25,000	\$1,725,000
1,804 ELLs x \$5,000	<u>\$9,020,000</u>
	<b>\$10,745,000</b>

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