

Government of the District of Columbia
Office of the Chief Financial Officer



Natwar M. Gandhi
Chief Financial Officer

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Phil Mendelson
Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia

FROM: Natwar M. Gandhi
Chief Financial Officer 

DATE: September 23, 2013

SUBJECT: Fiscal Impact Statement – “Focused Student Achievement Amendment Act of 2013”

REFERENCE: Bill 20-311 – Draft Committee Print provided to the Office of Revenue Analysis on September 12, 2013

Conclusion

Funds are sufficient in the FY 2014 through FY 2017 budget and financial plan to implement the bill.

Background

The bill requires the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) to develop and administer annual District-wide assessments¹ for students in grades three through eight and one for high school. It authorizes additional assessments as OSSE deems appropriate, and requires OSSE to develop guidelines for the administration of practice tests. The bill also authorizes Local Education Authorities² (LEAs) to develop and administer appropriate tests under guidelines to be established by OSSE.

The bill also establishes the following rules regarding the promotion and retention of students in the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS):

- Students in pre-kindergarten through second grade will be promoted or retained based on the decision of a student’s teacher;
- Students in grade three must earn passing grades in English, Mathematics and a majority of the student’s other subject areas to be promoted;

¹ D.C. Official Code § 38-1800.02(13).

² The bill defines LEAs as educational institutions at the local level that exists primarily to operate a publicly funded school or schools in the District of Columbia, including the District of Columbia Public Schools and District of Columbia public charter schools.

The Honorable Phil Mendelson

FIS: Bill 20-311, "Focused Student Achievement Amendment Act of 2013," Draft Committee Print provided to the Office of Revenue Analysis on September 12, 2013.

- Students in grade four through eight must earn passing grades in a majority of his or her subjects to be promoted;
- Students in grade nine through 11 must meet requirements set forth in the District of Columbia Municipal Regulations; and
- Students with 30 or more absences in a school year cannot be promoted.

The bill permits principals to promote students not meeting established requirements, if the principal provides a written explanation to the Chancellor of DCPS. Principals must also notify students and parents of students who may face retention. Regular reporting by principals is required to the Chancellor, and at the end of the year the Chancellor must report on all retained students to OSSE. Lastly, the bill requires a retained student to attend summer school, and if completed, be reevaluated for promotion to the next grade.

Financial Plan Impact

Funds are sufficient in the FY 2014 through FY 2017 budget and financial plan to implement the bill. OSSE already develops and administers District-wide assessments within its current resources, and the bill's promotion and retention requirements do not have a fiscal impact on DCPS. Additionally, requiring students retained in the same grade to attend summer school can be absorbed within DCPS's current resources. However, there is some uncertainty as to how significantly the requirements in the bill will increase summer school enrollment. DCPS should carefully monitor likely summer school enrollment levels to ensure it will remain on budget.