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LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE
BILL ANALYSIS
56th Legislature, 1st Session, 2023

Bill Number	<u>SB95</u>	Sponsor	<u>Muñoz</u>
Tracking Number	<u>.223385.2</u>	Committee Referrals	<u>SEC/SFC</u>
Short Title	<u>Statewide School Safety</u>		
Analyst	<u>Bedeaux</u>	Original Date	<u>1/26/23</u>
		Last Updated	<u></u>

BILL SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

Senate Bill 95 (SB95) appropriates \$25 million to the Public Education Department (PED) for school safety statewide.

FISCAL IMPACT

The bill appropriates \$25 million from the public school capital outlay fund (PSCOF) to PED for expenditure in FY24. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of FY24 shall revert to the PSCOF.

SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

School security continues to be a capital outlay priority for school districts. During the 2022 legislative interim, LESC, the Public School Capital Outlay Council (PSCOC), and the Public School Capital Outlay Oversight Task Force (PSCOOTF) heard testimony from many school districts requesting financial support for updated school security technologies, including cameras, fencing, metal detectors, electronic entry systems, secure school vestibules, and even gunshot detection technologies. Requests for school security funding come on the heels of a fatal 2022 shooting at an elementary school in Uvalde, Texas that left 19 elementary school students and two teachers dead, as well as an incident in Newport, Virginia where a six-year-old student managed to smuggle a gun into school and shoot his teacher.

Despite renewed requests for security funding, school districts did not take full advantage of the now defunct PSCOC school security program, which set aside \$10 million per year from FY18 through FY22 for school security projects statewide. Awards from the program, which was created in response to a 2017 shooting at Aztec High School, never reached the full \$10 million annual threshold authorized in statute. One reason for the unpopularity of the expired security program may have been its cumbersome application process, as well as the presence of direct legislative offsets in many school districts, which disincentives participation in PSCOC award programs.

Covid-19 may have also changed many districts’ local priorities, reducing demand for school security and increasing demand for educational technology infrastructure.

In 2022, the legislature authorized a \$75 million appropriation to the Public Schools Facilities Authority (PSFA) that was distributed directly to school districts based on a simple methodology. PSFA was required to provide each school district with the greater of \$100 thousand or an amount proportional to the district’s state match from the Public School Capital Improvements Act (commonly known as SB9). The methodology was considered effective, with funding flowing directly to school districts early in the school year. School districts are required to report to PSFA how the funding is used, with security infrastructure being an allowable expense.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

Because the bill does not specify how the funds should be distributed, PED would be required to develop a methodology to administer the \$25 million appropriation. The department could choose to distribute the \$25 million via any number of methods, such as a competitive grant program, a per-MEM distribution, or a flat distribution.

ALTERNATIVES

A bill endorsed by the Public School Capital Outlay Task Force and the Legislative Education Study Committee for the 2023 legislative session, [SB131](#), would appropriate \$25 million for school security projects and \$75 million for “local priorities” statewide, potentially making SB95 unnecessary. The methodology for distribution of funding in SB131 is similar to the \$75 million appropriated in FY23, with schools eligible for the greater of a minimum amount or an amount proportional to their SB9 state match.

RELATED BILLS

Related to SB131, Public School Funding Changes, which would appropriate \$25 million for school security and \$75 million for local priorities statewide.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- LESC Files
- Public School Facilities Authority (PSFA)

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