

Early Teacher Hiring Now Permanent

Pilot Program Dramatically Reduced Late Hiring of Teachers and Improved Schools' Ability to Compete With Surrounding States for Quality New Teachers

DOVER, DE— This afternoon, Governor Jack A. Markell signed H.B. 259 into law, which passed both the House and the Senate unanimously this week.

House Bill 259 makes permanent the pilot program originally created in 2011, which required the state's Department of Education to estimate each school district's enrollment for the following school year in May, and guarantee state funds to each district sufficient to cover 98% of the state's share of hiring the teachers justified by that enrollment estimate.

The pilot program, created through legislation implementing the recommendations of a task force chaired by Lieutenant Governor Matt Denn and State Senator David Sokola, demonstrated extraordinary success in allowing Delaware school districts to better compete with surrounding states for new teachers and adequately train those new teachers before the start of the school year. Before this legislation, school districts were losing teaching candidates to other states that were making firm offers earlier in the year because districts couldn't risk getting less state money than they expected and the state didn't guarantee any funds until September 30th, when final student counts were done.

Under the pilot program, the state started estimating districts' student population in May and guaranteeing the districts 98% of the state funds for the upcoming school year that would be generated by that estimated number of students. The change was dramatic – a 44% increase in the proportion of

teachers hired before August.

“This bill improves our public schools,” said Lt. Governor Denn. “We are always trying to hire the best and brightest to teach our children and now we will hopefully be able to do more of that in a timely fashion. This is a win for students and teachers alike.”

Governor Markell said, “I’d like to thank Lt. Governor Denn, Senator Sokola, and Representative Scott for their work on getting this important piece of legislation passed. This will allow us to offer attractive jobs to new teachers on par with our surrounding states and supports our ongoing effort to recruit and retain talented educators.”

The University of Delaware’s Institute for Public Administration, in its ninth annual Delaware Teacher and Administrator Supply and Demand Survey Analysis Report, quantified the change in early teacher hiring caused by the pilot program: the percentage of school district teachers who were hired after July 31st dropped from 64.3% in the 2010-2011 school year, to 48.6% in 2011-2012 and 46.5% in 2012-2013 (Delaware Teacher and Administrator Supply and Demand Survey Analysis Report, June 2013, at p. 12). The report can be found online at http://www.ipa.udel.edu/publications/teacher_supply13.pdf

This significant drop in the percentage of late-hired teachers was directly attributed by the University of Delaware to the pilot early teacher hiring program:

What has led to the reduction in later teacher hiring in Delaware? The most obvious answer is Senate Bill 164 with House Amendment 1, the extension of SB 16. SB 16 requires that projections of enrollment be made by April 15 and that the State will guarantee that school districts receive funds equivalent to 98 percent of these projections. This bill was aimed at decreasing late teacher hiring, and it appears to

have had the desired effect. (Delaware Teacher and Administrator Supply and Demand Survey Analysis Report at p. 50).

State Representative Darryl Scott, prime sponsor of House Bill 259 and one of the original sponsors of the 2011 pilot program, said, "We want to hire the very best teachers and make sure they're ready to start strong on the first day of school. We've seen conclusive evidence that tells us early unit counts are helping our districts achieve that goal, and I am glad we have now made that policy permanent."

Senator Sokola, the Senate sponsor of House Bill 259 and the original sponsor Senate Bill 16, added, "In my work, I understand the importance of testing and validating data. I'm pleased that the data have validated this experiment in giving our schools more flexibility in hiring top-quality teachers and that it is permanent."

Other original sponsors of Senate Bill 16 who co-sponsored the legislation making it permanent are Representative Debra Heffernan and Representative Earl Jaques.