



Legislative Fiscal Bureau

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May, 2019

Joint Committee on Finance

Paper #602

Wisconsin Reading Corps (DPI -- Administrative and Other Funding)

[LFB 2019-21 Budget Summary: Page 356, #13]

CURRENT LAW

Under 2017 Act 59, Wisconsin Reading Corps was provided with one-time funding of \$300,000 GPR in 2017-18 and \$700,000 GPR in 2018-19, with a requirement that the organization provide matching funds of \$250,000 in each year as a condition of receiving the state payment. No payments can be made after June 30, 2019.

GOVERNOR

Provide \$700,000 GPR annually for the Wisconsin Reading Corps (WRC). Additionally, delete current law limiting the grants to the 2017-18 and 2018-19 fiscal years, but continue to require that WRC meet a \$250,000 annual matching requirement in order to receive funds.

DISCUSSION POINTS

1. The Reading Corps is an AmeriCorps program focusing on providing one-on-one literacy tutoring to pupils in grades K-3. The program began in 2003 in Minnesota, and has since served 250,000 pupils. Currently, the program is operating in 12 states and Washington, D.C., with 1,700 tutors serving 35,000 pupils annually.
2. Under the program, AmeriCorps tutors commit to serve for at least one year, and spend their time providing daily tutoring in an elementary school. Tutors receive training prior to the start of the school year, as well as ongoing literacy coaching throughout the year from an on-site supervisor and a master coach, who is a literacy expert who provides tutors and their supervisors with additional

support. Pupils are identified using benchmark assessment data to find pupils who are at risk for reading difficulties. Each tutor provides daily 20 minute sessions to approximately 15-18 pupils using standardized activities prescribed by the organization, working on foundational literacy skills such as phonological awareness, letter sound knowledge, decoding skills, and oral reading fluency. Pupils participating in the program complete weekly progress monitoring assessments to assess the effectiveness of their current tutoring interventions and whether the pupil is ready to exit the program.

3. WRC started in the 2015-16 school year. In 2017-18, 18 tutors served in 12 schools in Milwaukee under the program. In 2018-19, the program expanded to include additional schools in Milwaukee and Racine. The program is expected to operate in 28 schools in Milwaukee, Racine, and Watertown in the 2019-20 school year. The Governor's recommended funding of \$700,000 annually would continue the program with the same level of moneys as was provided on a one-time basis in 2018-19. Local support for the program is provided by Milwaukee Succeeds, the Greater Milwaukee Foundation, and other local organizations and businesses, as well as private donations.

4. A randomized controlled trial conducted by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago and published in October, 2018, found positive results for pupils receiving tutoring under the program. The study was conducted by randomly assigning 176 kindergarten and first-grade pupils at ten participating Milwaukee public schools to either receive tutoring under the program or be part of a control group. The study found that kindergarten pupils who participating in the program demonstrated significantly higher letter sound fluency scores, and were on track to exceed grade level expectations within one semester. First graders participating in the program did not meet grade level benchmarks after one semester of tutoring, but demonstrated significant improvement on basic literacy skills compared to the control group.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Approve the Governor's recommendation to provide \$700,000 annually for the Wisconsin Reading Corps.

ALT 1	Change to	
	Base	Bill
GPR	\$1,400,000	\$0

2. Take no action.

ALT 2	Change to	
	Base	Bill
GPR	\$0	-\$1,400,000

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