

Senate Study Bill 2023

Conference Committee Text

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1 1 Section 1. NEW SECTION. 258B.1 STATEWIDE ENVIRONMENTAL
1 2 EDUCATION STRATEGY.
1 3 1. It is in the interest of the citizens of Iowa that a
1 4 comprehensive environmental education initiative be undertaken
1 5 that will result in environmentally literate and responsible
1 6 citizens who will effectively and constructively solve
1 7 existing environmental problems, prevent new environmental
1 8 problems, and maintain a sustainable environment for future
1 9 Iowans. A healthy economy is intimately linked to a healthy
1 10 environment. The appropriate audiences for environmental
1 11 education include both formal and nonformal audiences,
1 12 business, labor, governments, nonprofit entities, and
1 13 citizens.
1 14 2. The goal of this initiative is to assure that Iowans
1 15 are environmentally literate. An environmentally literate
1 16 citizen is committed to lifelong learning and understands the
1 17 following:
1 18 a. Basic principles of ecology, sociology, and economics.
1 19 b. The interconnection of all parts of the environment.
1 20 c. The environmental and social costs and benefits of
1 21 consumer decisions.
1 22 d. Sources of energy, the improving of energy efficiency,
1 23 and the relationships between energy use and life styles.
1 24 e. The implications of economic and population trends.
1 25 f. The impacts of personal life styles and personal
1 26 choices.
1 27 g. The importance of acting in a sustainable and
1 28 constructive manner to protect the quality and diversity of
1 29 the natural world.
1 30 3. An office of environmental education, an interagency
1 31 environmental education committee, a state plan, a curriculum
1 32 framework, teacher environmental programs, preschool to adult
1 33 environmental education programs, environmental education
1 34 assistance programs, and a grants program shall be established
1 35 to achieve the goal of accomplishing this initiative. For
2 1 purposes of this chapter, "nonformal education" means
2 2 education which takes place outside of the formal, educational
2 3 classroom setting.
2 4 Sec. 2. NEW SECTION. 258B.2 OFFICE OF ENVIRONMENTAL
2 5 EDUCATION.
2 6 1. An office of environmental education is established and
2 7 administratively attached to the Iowa department of education.
2 8 The full-time supervisor of the office shall be an experienced
2 9 environmental educator. The office shall be staffed by
2 10 appropriately trained personnel.
2 11 2. The office of environmental education shall do all of
2 12 the following:
2 13 a. Develop and publish a plan for environmental education
2 14 with assistance from the interagency environmental education
2 15 committee.
2 16 b. Assess the status of environmental literacy of the
2 17 state's students, teachers, and citizens every four years.
2 18 c. Review the state's plan for environmental education
2 19 every four years with the assistance of the interagency
2 20 environmental education committee, revise the plan as needed,
2 21 and transmit the plan to the governor and the general

2 22 assembly.

2 23 d. Administer the environmental education grants program.

2 24 e. Promote and aid in the establishment and evaluation of
2 25 school environmental education programs for preschool through
2 26 grade twelve.

2 27 f. Promote and aid in the development of preservice and
2 28 inservice environmental education programs for educators
2 29 through cooperation with groups including, but not limited to,
2 30 the Iowa conservation education council and Iowa's colleges
2 31 and universities.

2 32 g. Cooperate with federal and state agencies and the
2 33 private sector in developing, promoting, and evaluating
2 34 environmental education programs.

2 35 h. Function as an environmental education clearinghouse by
3 1 doing all of the following:

3 2 (1) Reviewing and recommending environmental education
3 3 materials.

3 4 (2) Cooperating with state agencies and organizations in
3 5 the development and distribution of an environmental education
3 6 newsletter.

3 7 (3) Establishing an electronic capacity to disseminate
3 8 data bases of environmental education information and to
3 9 network with intrastate, interstate, and federal programs.

3 10 i. Promote the development of cooperative environmental
3 11 education initiatives with the private sector.

3 12 j. Facilitate and encourage formal and nonformal
3 13 environmental education programs; facilitate, encourage, and
3 14 support multi-school districts' cooperative efforts to assess
3 15 the need for, develop, and evaluate environmental education
3 16 curricula, promote state government and private sector policy
3 17 that is consistent with the environmental education plan
3 18 established in this legislation, and assist in the
3 19 coordination of formal and nonformal environmental education
3 20 with the kindergarten through grade twelve and postsecondary
3 21 environmental education programs.

3 22 k. Initiate research on environmental education as called
3 23 for in the environmental education plan by issuing contracts
3 24 to organizations, colleges, universities, and other research-
3 25 based institutions.

3 26 l. Coordinate environmental education conferences to
3 27 assist in the dissemination, development, and achievement of
3 28 the state's environmental education plan.

3 29 Sec. 3. NEW SECTION. 258B.3 INTERAGENCY ENVIRONMENTAL
3 30 EDUCATION COMMITTEE.

3 31 1. An interagency environmental education committee is
3 32 established. The committee shall be composed of individuals
3 33 with knowledge in environmental education and the members
3 34 shall be employees appointed by each agency head. These
3 35 agencies may include, but are not necessarily limited to, the
4 1 departments of agriculture and land stewardship, cultural
4 2 affairs, education, economic development, human services,
4 3 natural resources, public health, and transportation, the
4 4 state board of regents, and the attorney general's office.
4 5 The chair shall be elected by the members.

4 6 2. Members of the committee shall serve as environmental
4 7 education coordinators for their respective agencies. They
4 8 shall direct an assessment of their own agency's target
4 9 audiences and develop appropriate programs to educate these
4 10 audiences regarding environmental issues. The committee shall
4 11 establish subcommittees as needed and assist with the
4 12 development and implementation of the state's environmental
4 13 education plan.

4 14 3. The committee shall develop and maintain a memorandum
4 15 of understanding to specify methods by which the agencies can
4 16 share their resources to benefit environmental education in
4 17 the state.

4 18 4. The committee shall promote networking, coordination,

4 19 and cooperation among state agencies, promote the efficient
4 20 distribution of information, and facilitate the planning and
4 21 development of educational programs and materials. The
4 22 department of education is responsible for convening and
4 23 facilitating the functions of the committee.

4 24 5. Members of the committee are not eligible to receive
4 25 any separate compensation and are not eligible for
4 26 reimbursement of expenses from the committee.

4 27 Sec. 4. NEW SECTION. 258B.4 GRANTS PROGRAM.

4 28 The office of environmental education shall administer a
4 29 grant program that shall award grants annually to
4 30 organizations, agencies, institutions, and individuals for the
4 31 development, dissemination, and evaluation of environmental
4 32 education programs. The office of environmental education
4 33 shall develop a grant evaluation plan. Proposals addressing
4 34 needs and priorities identified by the office of environmental
4 35 education or included in the state plan for environmental
5 1 education shall receive priority. The office of environmental
5 2 education shall adopt rules establishing specific criteria and
5 3 guidelines for the grants program. An annual appropriation
5 4 shall be provided to fund the grants program.

5 5 Sec. 5. NEW SECTION. 258B.5 ASSISTANCE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL
5 6 EDUCATION.

5 7 1. The goal of providing financial assistance for
5 8 environmental education shall be to provide a minimum of one
5 9 environmental education staff person for every three to four
5 10 thousand pupils in grades kindergarten through grade twelve in
5 11 a county.

5 12 2. Financial assistance shall be provided to county
5 13 conservation boards to support the hiring of professional
5 14 environmental educators to assist schools and nonformal
5 15 education sectors in planning and leading environmental
5 16 education programs. The financial assistance shall be used to
5 17 provide staff and equipment for these programs and shall not
5 18 be used for the construction or maintenance of parks,
5 19 buildings, or other physical facilities. The financial
5 20 assistance shall not replace existing county moneys budgeted
5 21 for environmental education. Financial assistance shall be
5 22 provided as follows:

5 23 a. Ten thousand one hundred dollars shall be allocated to
5 24 each county, regardless of population. One million one
5 25 hundred thousand dollars shall be divided among eligible
5 26 counties on a population-based formula detailed in paragraphs
5 27 "b" through "d".

5 28 b. A county shall be declared eligible if the county
5 29 submits certification that the county will do both of the
5 30 following:

5 31 (1) Provide county funding or support equivalent to one
5 32 cent per thousand dollars of the assessed value of taxable
5 33 property in the county or thirty-five thousand dollars,
5 34 whichever is less, according to a formula outlined in
5 35 paragraph "c", for environmental education.

6 1 (2) Explain how the financial assistance will be spent for
6 2 environmental education.

6 3 c. In order to meet county funding or support
6 4 requirements, county conservation boards may include the
6 5 dollar equivalent of the following county support:

6 6 (1) Salaries and benefits for all full-time and part-time
6 7 naturalists, environmental education coordinators,
6 8 environmental program specialists, and other positions whose
6 9 responsibilities lie solely within the county conservation
6 10 board's environmental education program.

6 11 (2) For staff positions involving some responsibilities
6 12 outside the environmental education program, such as a ranger,
6 13 a percentage of the salary and benefits equal to that portion
6 14 of time devoted specifically to the environmental education
6 15 program.

6 16 (3) Operation and maintenance, but not purchase, of a
6 17 county vehicle designated to be used specifically by the
6 18 environmental education program staff.

6 19 (4) Funds budgeted specifically for the environmental
6 20 education program, including, but not limited to: program
6 21 supplies, office supplies, telephone and communications,
6 22 uniforms, newsletters and other public relations tools,
6 23 publicity, library and resource materials, printing or
6 24 purchase of environmental and conservation education resource
6 25 materials, travel, and professional development workshops and
6 26 conferences.

6 27 The costs of construction or maintenance of parks,
6 28 buildings or any physical facilities shall specifically not be
6 29 used to meet the county funding or support requirements.

6 30 d. Counties declared eligible shall receive financial
6 31 assistance under this section according to the following
6 32 formula: official population figure of the county according
6 33 to the most recent federal decennial census times forty cents.

6 34 e. In order to fulfill the county funding or support
6 35 requirements of this section, county conservation boards may
7 1 contract with private nature centers, camps, or other private
7 2 or public entities to provide these environmental education
7 3 services. The boards shall submit an annual report to the
7 4 office of environmental education demonstrating and certifying
7 5 the proper use of these funds.

7 6 f. The focus of this financial assistance shall be, but is
7 7 not limited to: helping teachers, group leaders, and other
7 8 environmental educators to plan, develop, and implement
7 9 environmental education programs, including leading outdoor
7 10 environmental education classes for all ages and for both
7 11 formal and nonformal educational groups; providing program
7 12 resources such as environmental education activity guides and
7 13 curricula, learning kits, audiovisual materials, literature,
7 14 and equipment; and interpreting Iowa's natural and cultural
7 15 resources and how to use them wisely.

7 16 Sec. 6. NEW SECTION. 258B.6 RESIDENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL
7 17 EDUCATION PROGRAMS.

7 18 1. A residential environmental education program is
7 19 created to recognize the critical role that both direct
7 20 experience with the outdoors and a several-day residential
7 21 experience away from home and the formal school environment
7 22 play in the formation of an environmentally literate
7 23 citizenry.

7 24 2. Phase I of the program shall provide supplemental
7 25 funding of thirty-five dollars per pupil to school districts
7 26 that choose to provide for the attendance of the pupils in one
7 27 grade level at a certified residential environmental education
7 28 center. To receive this funding, school districts must
7 29 provide proof of attendance by their pupils at such a center
7 30 and participation by pupils in a certified program for a
7 31 minimum of three consecutive days for each pupil. Local
7 32 school districts shall choose the grade level and the time of
7 33 year they feel is most developmentally appropriate for this
7 34 residential experience.

7 35 3. Phase II of the program shall consist of all of the
8 1 following:

8 2 a. Development of certification criteria for facilities,
8 3 staff, and programs.

8 4 b. Census of existing facilities, staff, and programs
8 5 relative to the certification criteria.

8 6 c. Assessment of the needs of these facilities.

8 7 4. The program shall be administered by the office of
8 8 environmental education.

8 9 EXPLANATION

8 10 This bill establishes an environmental education strategy
8 11 for the state of Iowa. The bill also establishes a state
8 12 office of environmental education for all of Iowa's citizens

8 13 from preschoolers to adults. The office is administratively
8 14 attached to the department of education to establish and
8 15 coordinate a plan for the state. The office is to serve as a
8 16 clearinghouse, a database headquarters, and to coordinate with
8 17 federal and state agencies and the private sector in
8 18 developing and implementing environmental education
8 19 strategies. A grants program is also established to be
8 20 administered by the office of environmental education.

8 21 An interagency environmental education committee is
8 22 established to coordinate efforts among state agencies to
8 23 promote and assist in providing environmental education
8 24 programs in the state.

8 25 A funding program is established for county conservation
8 26 boards, including a formula to determine eligibility of each
8 27 county board.

8 28 The bill also provides for reimbursements to a school
8 29 district of \$35 per public school pupil who spends three
8 30 consecutive days at a certified residential environmental
8 31 education center.

8 32 LSB 3241XC 76

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