A BILL FOR

1 An Act requiring the director of the department of education to
2 establish a low-income student and poverty weighting work
3 group.
4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF IOWA:
Section 1. POVERTY WEIGHTING WORK GROUP.

1. School funding has grown increasingly inequitable as it relates to supporting socioeconomically disadvantaged students. In order to meet the needs of such students and to ensure access to the same opportunities that economically advantaged school districts offer, school districts with higher percentages of students in poverty spend more per pupil to cover the cost of the students' increased needs as compared to economically advantaged school districts. Children from economically disadvantaged homes often enter school with a more limited vocabulary and fewer educational life experiences than those from economically advantaged homes. According to the child and family policy center, children living in poverty are more likely than their peers to experience stress and deprivation that hinders development and readiness for school and life. Significant levels of poverty exist in all ninety-nine counties of this state and, therefore, the general assembly should consider additional ways to close the opportunity gap within the funding formula.

2. According to the 2018 condition of education annual report, forty and one-half percent of Iowa students are eligible for free and reduced price meals under the federal National School Lunch Act and the federal Child Nutrition Act of 1966, 42 U.S.C. §§1751-1785, the most widely used measure of student poverty, including within Iowa's methodology for funding at-risk and dropout prevention programs.

3. The school finance formula review committee established under section 257.1, subsection 4, met on December 13, 2019, and recommended to the general assembly the creation of a poverty weighting study committee.

4. The director of the department of education shall establish and appoint members to a work group to examine Iowa's current methodology for determining levels of student poverty and alternative methodologies available, including examination of relevant studies and testimony of relevant experts,
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determine if the current methodology effectively measures the needs of low-income students, and make recommendations for funding methodologies to provide additional funding to school districts for students from low-income households. The department of education shall work cooperatively to provide staffing assistance for the work group. The work group shall be composed of at least all of the following:

a. One member representing the Iowa association of school boards.
b. One member representing the area education agencies.
c. One member representing the Iowa state education association.
d. One member representing the school administrators of Iowa.
e. One member representing the urban education network of Iowa.
f. One member representing the rural school advocates of Iowa.
g. One representative of the school district with the highest basic enrollment under section 257.6 for the school budget year beginning July 1, 2020.
h. One representative of a school district with a basic enrollment under section 257.6 for the school budget year beginning July 1, 2020, that is ranked in the highest one-third among all school districts in the state.
i. One representative of a school district with a basic enrollment under section 257.6 for the school budget year beginning July 1, 2020, that is ranked in the middle one-third among all school districts in the state.
j. One representative of a school district with a basic enrollment under section 257.6 for the school budget year beginning July 1, 2020, that is ranked in the lowest one-third among all school districts in the state.
k. One representative of a school district located in whole or in part less than one hundred miles from the eastern border
1 of this state.

1. One representative of a school district located in whole
or in part more than one hundred miles from both the eastern
border of this state and the western border of this state.

m. One representative of a school district located in whole
or in part less than one hundred miles from the western border
of this state.

n. Four ex officio, nonvoting legislative members
consisting of the following:

(1) Two state senators, one appointed by the majority leader
of the senate and one appointed by the minority leader of the
senate.

(2) Two state representatives, one appointed by the speaker
and one appointed by the minority leader of the house of
representatives.

5. By January 2, 2021, the work group shall submit
recommendations to the general assembly and the governor for
new or modified funding methodologies to provide additional
funding for students from low-income households.

EXPLANATION

The inclusion of this explanation does not constitute agreement with
the explanation's substance by the members of the general assembly.

This bill directs the director of the department of
education to establish a work group to examine Iowa's current
methodology for determining levels of student poverty and
alternative methodologies available, including examination of
relevant studies and testimony of relevant experts, determine
if the current methodology effectively measures the needs of
low-income students, and make recommendations for funding
methodologies to provide additional funding for students from
low-income households. The bill directs the department of
education to work cooperatively to provide staffing assistance
for the work group and establishes the minimum persons
comprising the work group. By January 2, 2021, the work group
is required to submit recommendations to the general assembly.
1 and the governor for new or modified funding methodologies
2 to provide additional funding for students from low-income
3 households.