

House File 268 - Introduced

HOUSE FILE 268

BY HINSON

A BILL FOR

1 An Act requiring the department of management to establish and
2 operate a searchable internet site containing budget, audit,
3 and financial information of school districts.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF IOWA:

1 Section 1. NEW SECTION. 8G.20 Intent — findings.

2 The general assembly finds that taxpayers should be able to
3 easily access the details on how school districts are spending
4 their tax dollars and other school revenues. Therefore, it is
5 the intent of the general assembly to direct the department of
6 management to create and maintain a searchable internet site
7 in order to provide information on the budgets, audits, and
8 financial information of school districts.

9 Sec. 2. NEW SECTION. 8G.21 Short title.

10 This subchapter shall be known as and may be cited as the
11 *"School District Transparency Act"*.

12 Sec. 3. NEW SECTION. 8G.22 Definitions.

13 As used in this subchapter, unless the context otherwise
14 requires:

15 1. *"Director"* means the director of the department of
16 management.

17 2. *"Searchable internet site"* means an internet site
18 that allows the public at no cost to search and compile the
19 information identified in section 8G.23 and that provides such
20 information in a format capable of being downloaded from the
21 site to personal computers.

22 3. *"State audit or report"* shall include any audit or report
23 required or authorized by law, including an audit or report
24 issued by the auditor of state, a state agency as defined in
25 section 8A.101, the legislative services agency, the general
26 assembly, or a legislative committee.

27 Sec. 4. NEW SECTION. 8G.23 School district financial
28 information searchable internet site created.

29 1. By January 1, 2021, the director shall develop and make
30 publicly available a searchable internet site for searching,
31 accessing, and processing the items, data, and information
32 required in this section, for the most recent school budget
33 year. The searchable internet site shall be developed in such
34 a way that the information can be provided to other software
35 applications, including internet software applications, in a

1 manner and format that allows such software applications to
2 access and interpret the items, data, and information using
3 the internal programming of the software applications. In
4 gathering or receiving items, data, and information from school
5 districts, the director shall make a good-faith effort to
6 minimize the costs and disruptions to each school district and
7 the school district's computer systems.

8 2. *a.* The searchable internet site developed pursuant to
9 this section shall allow the public at no cost to search and
10 compile the information provided pursuant to this subsection.
11 Each school district shall provide to the department of
12 management the following:

13 (1) The school district's budget prepared and certified
14 under chapter 24.

15 (2) All state audits or reports of the school district.

16 (3) The school district's quarterly financial statements
17 and other financial information including but not limited
18 to accounts payable check registers and credit, debit, and
19 purchase card statements.

20 (4) Any other information related to the items required
21 under subparagraph (1), (2), or (3), as specified by the
22 director.

23 *b.* Nothing in this subchapter shall be construed to require
24 or authorize the inclusion of personal information or other
25 information that is protected from public disclosure under
26 state or federal law or that is confidential in the searchable
27 internet site.

28 **Sec. 5. NEW SECTION. 8G.24 Searchable internet site**
29 **updates.**

30 1. Effective July 1, 2021, the searchable internet site
31 shall be updated regularly as new items, data, and information
32 become available, but shall be updated no less frequently than
33 quarterly thereafter as new items, data, and information become
34 available. All school districts shall provide to the director
35 data that is required to be included on the searchable internet

1 site not later than sixty days following the close of each
2 quarter during the school budget year. The director shall
3 provide guidance to school districts to ensure compliance with
4 this section.

5 2. By January 1 following the conclusion of a school budget
6 year, the director shall add items, data, and information
7 for that school budget year to the searchable internet site.
8 Items, data, and information for previous school budget years
9 may be added as it becomes available and as time permits. The
10 director shall ensure that all items, data, and information
11 added to the searchable internet site remain accessible to the
12 public for a minimum of ten years.

13 Sec. 6. NEW SECTION. **8G.25 Noncompliance.**

14 The director shall not be considered in compliance with this
15 subchapter if the items, data, and information required for
16 the searchable internet site are not available in a searchable
17 manner and capable of being compiled or if the public is
18 redirected to other government internet sites unless each of
19 those sites displays information from all school districts
20 and each category of information required can be searched
21 electronically by field in a single search.

22 Sec. 7. **SCHOOL DISTRICT FINANCIAL INFORMATION INTERNET SITE**
23 **REPORT.** The department of management shall conduct a study
24 to evaluate the development, implementation, compliance, and
25 use of the searchable internet site required under section
26 8G.23. The department of management shall submit a report on
27 the study, including the findings and recommendations of the
28 department, to the general assembly on or before January 1,
29 2026.

30 Sec. 8. **STATE MANDATE FUNDING SPECIFIED.** In accordance
31 with section 25B.2, subsection 3, the state cost of requiring
32 compliance with any state mandate included in this Act shall
33 be paid by a school district from state school foundation aid
34 received by the school district under section 257.16. This
35 specification of the payment of the state cost shall be deemed

1 to meet all of the state funding-related requirements of
2 section 25B.2, subsection 3, and no additional state funding
3 shall be necessary for the full implementation of this Act
4 by and enforcement of this Act against all affected school
5 districts.

6 EXPLANATION

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

9 This bill establishes legislative findings that taxpayers
10 should be able to easily access the details on how school
11 districts are spending their tax dollars and other school
12 revenues. Additionally, the bill provides that it is the
13 intent of the general assembly to direct the department of
14 management to create and maintain a searchable internet site
15 in order to provide information on the budgets, audits, and
16 financial information of school districts.

17 Under the bill, by January 1, 2021, the director of the
18 department of management shall develop and make publicly
19 available a searchable internet site for searching, accessing,
20 and processing the items, data, and information required
21 in the bill for the most recent school budget year. The
22 searchable internet site is required to be developed in such
23 a way that the information can be provided to other software
24 applications, including internet software applications, in a
25 manner and format that allows such software applications to
26 access and interpret the items, data, and information using
27 the internal programming of the software applications. The
28 searchable internet site developed pursuant to the bill is
29 required to allow the public at no cost to search and compile
30 such information. Each school district is required to provide
31 the following to the department of management: (1) the school
32 district's budget; (2) all state audits or reports of the
33 school district; (3) the school district's quarterly financial
34 statements and other specified financial information; and (4)
35 any other information related to items (1), (2), or (3), as

1 specified by the director of the department of management.

2 Effective July 1, 2021, the bill requires the searchable
3 internet site to be updated regularly as new items, data,
4 and information become available, but shall be updated no
5 less frequently than quarterly thereafter as new items, data,
6 and information become available. All school districts are
7 required to provide to the director data that is required to
8 be included on the searchable internet site not later than 60
9 days following the close of each quarter during the school
10 budget year. The bill requires the director of the department
11 of management to ensure that all items, data, and information
12 added to the searchable internet site remain accessible to
13 the public for a minimum of 10 years. By January 1 following
14 the conclusion of a school budget year, the director of the
15 department of management is required to add items, data, and
16 information for that budget year to the searchable internet
17 site. Items, data, and information for previous school budget
18 years may be added as it becomes available and as time permits.
19 The bill also establishes criteria to determine the director of
20 the department of management's compliance with the bill.

21 The bill requires the department of management to conduct a
22 study to evaluate the development, implementation, compliance,
23 and use of the searchable internet site required under the
24 bill and submit a report to the general assembly on or before
25 January 1, 2026.

26 The bill may include a state mandate as defined in Code
27 section 25B.3. The bill requires that the state cost of
28 any state mandate included in the bill be paid by a school
29 district from state school foundation aid received by the
30 school district under Code section 257.16. The specification
31 is deemed to constitute state compliance with any state mandate
32 funding-related requirements of Code section 25B.2. The
33 inclusion of this specification is intended to reinstate the
34 requirement of political subdivisions to comply with any state
35 mandates included in the bill.