



USOE INITIATIVE PROGRAMS - CARSON SMITH SCHOLARSHIPS

PUBLIC EDUCATION APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE
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ISSUE BRIEF

SUMMARY

The appropriation for the Carson Smith Scholarship Program is required by statute, 53A-1-706, to increase annually. Although this statutory mechanism is in place to increase the annual appropriation, the program is currently carrying a balance at the end of FY 2015. The Legislature may wish to evaluate the balances remaining in the program, expected changes in students qualifying for the scholarship, and consider using part of the balance to fund the increase.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

The Carson Smith Scholarship Program was created to award scholarships to students with disabilities to attend an eligible private school. The scholarship is designed for students who would qualify for special education and related services in public schools, preschool through 12th grade, whose parents choose an eligible private school. Statute dictates that,

Beginning with the 2013-2014 school year, the Legislature shall annually increase the amount of money appropriated under Subsection (1)(b) by an amount equal to the product of:

(i) the average scholarship amount awarded as of December 1 in the previous year; and

(ii) the product of:

A. the number of students in preschool through grade 12 in public schools statewide who have an IEP on December 1 of the previous year; and

B. 0.0007.

For FY 2017, this statutory increase is estimated to cost \$270,500 ongoing from the General Fund. At the end of FY 2015, the Carson Smith Scholarship program had a closing nonlapsing balance of \$849,500. If this balance remains mostly unexpended in the current fiscal year, remaining balances could be used to fund the increase in FY 2017.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Legislature may wish to consider using part of the balance the Carson Smith Scholarship Program is currently carrying to fund the statutorily mandated increase for the program.