STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

RS27495C1 / H0481

Over the last eight years the Idaho Legislature has appropriated nearly $200 million in technology funding to help local school districts and charter schools buy computers, wireless technology and network infrastructure. That technology is changing the way education is delivered in Idaho schools.

The Joint Finance and Appropriations Committee took the next step in that transformation by dedicating a part of the "Content and Curriculum" line item for distribution to local districts so they can buy digital content and curriculum. However, it is distributed based on a formula, which means that most Idaho districts receive less than $5,000. That's simply not enough to purchase and implement high-quality digital curriculum.

This bill seeks to address that problem by changing the distribution of the line item from the current support-unit approach to a system of grants. Grants would be awarded to districts on a first-come, first-served basis, and would be limited to $50,000. Preference for the grants would be given to the districts with the most economically disadvantaged students and should be distributed around the state, thus assuring rural schools are given preference.

FISCAL NOTE

This bill does not require new funding because it repurposes an existing line item in the Public Schools Budget. For the 2020 Fiscal Year the Joint Finance and Appropriations Committee allocated $1.6 million of that line item to be distributed to districts, with each district receiving a small base amount along with an amount for every LEA support unit. This bill does not require that line item to be increased, but does change the distribution process.

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