

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

RS31992 / S1025

The Education Choice & Competition Act is designed to improve education in Idaho by making changes that are fair, responsible, transparent, and accountable, while also keeping government costs in check. The law builds on the existing Empowering Parents program, which will now expand to provide grants for tuition, along with other eligible education expenses, for students in pre-kindergarten through high school. These grants are prioritized for families earning less than \$80,000 per year. To reduce unnecessary and costly reporting, the law also introduces the Idaho Public Education Red Tape Reduction Program, which will cut down on unnecessary or duplicative reports required by the state. This change will save time and resources for school districts, allowing them to focus more on student needs. Going forward, schools will only need to submit reports required by federal law, with exceptions for new state programs. The law also addresses a \$66.5 million gap in special education funding, ensuring that more money is directed to support students with special needs. Finally, it makes changes to open enrollment to ensure fair access to special programs and resources across school districts, helping to create a more competitive and balanced educational system.

FISCAL NOTE

The existing department budget will cover costs associated with completing the report inventory in the Idaho Public Education Red Tape Reduction Program. Expanding Empowering Parents will require additional funding of up to \$20,000,000 per year from the general fund for a total program budget of \$50,000,000 ongoing per year. Empowering Parents resides with the State Board of Education, and their current annual budget to run the program is \$600,000. An additional \$30,000,000 in new funding for Special Education in Idaho public schools is requested from the General Fund with distribution to public school districts through the school funding formula. New spending for this legislation equals \$50,000,000 in general fund expenses.

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DISCLAIMER: This statement of purpose and fiscal note are a mere attachment to this bill and prepared by a proponent of the bill. It is neither intended as an expression of legislative intent nor intended for any use outside of the legislative process, including judicial review (Joint Rule 18).