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## **Superintendent Ybarra welcomes another big boost in public school funding**

(BOISE) – The Idaho Legislature’s budget-setting committee proposes a \$109 million increase in public school funding for the 2019-20 school year, representing a total boost to K-12 funding of well over half a billion dollars since Superintendent Sherri Ybarra took office five years ago.

“It’s very encouraging that our children’s education continues to be a top priority for lawmakers, who have increased the K-12 budget by more than \$100 million every year since I took office,” Superintendent of Public Instruction Sherri Ybarra said following the Joint Finance-Appropriations Committee session Monday morning.

“This isn’t everything we asked for, but the budget going forward represents huge strides for Idaho schools in terms of career ladder salary increases for teachers, increased discretionary funding for districts, doubled early literacy funding and more advanced opportunities for high school students as they set their sights on college and career.”

“Those are top priorities for the year ahead, meeting the requests of educators and parents throughout Idaho,” Superintendent Ybarra said.

One key priority, addressing the issue most stressed by Idaho families over the past year, was absent from the budgets moved forward by JFAC Monday.

“I’m very disappointed that no money was approved for our Keep Idaho Students Safe initiative,” Superintendent Ybarra said. “Along with parents and teachers, I am impatient for funding to meet this urgent need. But Idaho’s schools will continue doing their utmost to keep their students safe, and my department will continue to find ways to help them – including a school safety symposium in the works for later this year.”

“This conversation is not over.”

The superintendent had requested \$18.5 million in supplemental funding to immediately help districts across the state address pressing safety issues, social-emotional student needs and trauma-informed teaching strategies with one-time grant funding. And her full budget request included \$1.4 million

toward longer-term measures: a school safety course for teachers and other staff and a statewide crisis prevention counselor to help schools prevent, prepare for and respond to risk behaviors and crises.

Another key item in Superintendent Ybarra's budget request – \$1.4 million to expand the network of schools piloting mastery-based education in Idaho – is addressed in separate legislation that has not yet been heard.

"I remain hopeful lawmakers will approve our efforts to extend the mastery-based network to more communities, giving students a more engaging, individually tailored atmosphere in which they advance by mastering the subject matter," Superintendent Ybarra said.

If JFAC's K-12 budget is ultimately approved, ongoing efforts to recruit and retain teachers will get a boost via \$49.7 million to fund year five of the Career Ladder compensation system, plus nearly \$7.2 million to cover Master Educator Premiums during the first year of that new program.

Superintendent Ybarra's request for \$27.8 million in additional career ladder funds was omitted from the JFAC proposed budget, but a separate bill will be introduced to fund the superintendent's request for \$980,000 to create a "teacher pipeline" to help rural and remote school districts find and keep teachers for hard-to-fill positions.

"I will continue to advocate for more funding for our hard-working teachers in rural districts and throughout the state," Superintendent Ybarra said. "But on the whole the budget as moved forward by JFAC represents good news as we work to whittle down our state's teacher shortage."

Other good news comes from the committee's endorsement of big boosts in the discretionary funding provided to school districts throughout the state: about \$7.5 million for health insurance and \$7.1 million for other discretionary spending, Superintendent Ybarra said. The superintendent had requested slightly less for discretionary health insurance spending and about \$200,000 more in other discretionary funds.

The superintendent's request for a \$3 million increase in Idaho's wildly successful Advanced Opportunities program is fully funded under the JFAC proposal, paying for high school students to earn college credits and otherwise accelerate their success.

JFAC also moved to provide \$11.5 million – nearly all of the requested \$11.7 million -- to the Educational Services for the Deaf and Blind, where Superintendent Ybarra serves as board chair.

The committee's total proposed appropriation for K-12 schools in fiscal 2020 is \$2.26 billion, a 5.8 percent increase over last year's appropriation. JFAC will consider the operations budget for the State Department of Education next Monday.

"All in all, this public schools budget is good news for Idaho students, educators and families," Superintendent Ybarra said. "There are many competing demands for the state's resources, and once again education has emerged as a top priority."

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