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Superintendent Ybarra endorses literacy, optional full-day K bill

(BOISE) – A bill to enable state funding of optional, full-day kindergarten in all Idaho districts and charter schools was unanimously approved by the Senate Education Committee Wednesday, and Superintendent of Public Instruction Sherri Ybarra welcomed the news.

“Funding statewide, optional full-day kindergarten across the state was one of my top priorities for this legislative session, and Senate Bill 1373 will accomplish that,” Superintendent Ybarra said. “I particularly appreciate that the bill prioritizes services for economically disadvantaged students and that it provides individual districts with the flexibility to develop literacy intervention programs that will best support their students and meet local needs.”

The 2023 K-12 budget bill set by the Joint Finance-Appropriations Committee Monday increases total early literacy funding from \$26 million to \$72 million, and Senate Bill 1373 would outline how those funds are distributed to school districts, including for full-day kindergarten. The bill now goes to the Senate floor.

Deputy Superintendent for Communications and Policy Marilyn Whitney testified in favor of the bill Tuesday, noting that “the formula for distributing the funding will ensure all schools receive intervention funds based on enrollment and student proficiency. We are confident that if the formula needs to be adjusted in the future to ensure students who need the most help are eligible for funding, then the Legislature will make needed changes.”

“As always, the superintendent and her staff are ready to help support schools in ensuring they are providing evidence-based intervention programs and using proven strategies to make sure students have the help they need to become proficient readers,” Whitney said.

This bill, along with the dyslexia bill approved by the House Education Committee last week, “are game-changers in helping schools make greater progress toward our shared goal of seeing all third graders reading on grade level before moving on to fourth grade,” Whitney said.

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