

Memo

To: Board of Trustees
From: Rob Sauer
Date: 2/6/2025
Re: Superintendents Board Report

Updates

- On the second page of my report, I've put together a comparison of the two "school choice" bills making their way through the legislative process. They both made it out of their respective committees by one vote. Accountability or lack thereof seems to be a major issue with HB 93 as well as the fact that it really is a redistribution of wealth. If SB 1025 makes it out of the Senate, it likely won't pass in the House.
- You've probably heard some of the discussion related to the potential shutting down of the U.S. Department of Education. The department was established by Congress, so it would take an act of Congress to shut it down. We do receive all of our funding for programs like Title I and IDEA from Congressional appropriations. While it's not likely that all of the funding would be pulled, it could be moved to a different agency or even sent to the states under a block grant type of formula. Time will tell, but this process could take quite some time if it does happen.

School Choice Bills Comparison

Senate Bill 1025

- Expands Idaho's Empowering Parents program from \$30 million to \$50 million.
- Increases yearly grants from \$1,000 to \$5,000.
- Adds private school tuition as an eligible expense.
- The bill promises public schools an additional \$30 million in special education funding.
- Comply with state laws related to special education, nondiscrimination and parental rights.
- Parents of public school, private school and homeschool students between 3 and 18 years old would be eligible for the grants.
- 95% of the money would be reserved for families earning \$80,000 or less in adjusted gross income.
- Must maintain enrollment and performance data.
- Administer a nationally normed standardized test.
- Includes a sunset clause requiring a reevaluation in five years.

House Bill 93

- The program would be capped at \$50 million in tax credits, issued annually. The State Tax Commission would administer the program.
- Non-public school students eligible for up to \$5,000 in state funds covering tuition, tutoring, curriculum and other education expenses.
- Families earning 300% or less of the federal poverty limit — \$93,600 annually for a family of four — would have priority access to the funds, and they could request a one-time advance payment in their first year.
- Students with special needs could qualify for up to \$7,500.
- The bill restricts eligible expenses to school settings that teach English language arts, math, science and social studies. It doesn't require standardized testing or other measures of student performance required of public schools.
- It does require that schools benefiting from the tax credits — including private schools, micro-schools and learning pods — either be accredited or maintain a portfolio demonstrating learning growth in English, math, social studies and science.