



# Legislative Council Staff

## Research Note

Version: Final

Date: 10/31/2016

### Bill Number

**Senate Bill 16-104**

### Sponsors

***Senators Todd and Sonnenberg  
Representative Becker J.***

### Short Title

***Incentives To Build Number Of  
Rural Teachers***

### Research Analyst

**Rachel Kurtz-Phelan (x3028)**

### Status

This research note reflects the final version of the bill, which was signed by the Governor and took effect on June 6, 2016.

### Summary

This bill creates several new programs to provide incentives for individuals to become teachers in rural school districts, and to support the needs of professional educators in rural school districts, by:

- establishing a rural education coordinator position in the Department of Higher Education (DHE);
- providing financial incentives for student teachers who agree to teach in rural school districts;
- establishing a teacher cadet program to identify and support high school students in rural school districts who are interested in pursuing teaching careers in rural Colorado; and
- providing financial stipends to a teacher in a rural school or district who is seeking certification as either a National Board Certified Teacher or concurrent enrollment teacher, or who is furthering his or her professional development through continuing education.

### Background

Colorado school districts are classified based on their size and distance from a large urban area. A district is considered "small rural" if it has fewer than 1,000 students, and "rural" if it has fewer than 6,500 students. Of the 178 school districts in Colorado, 109 are considered small rural

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and 38 are considered rural. These districts educate approximately 20 percent of all students in Colorado.

Although the entire state is currently facing a shortage of teachers and teacher applicants, rural districts have the worst shortage. Enrollment in teacher preparation programs is down 23 percent from five years ago. The average teacher salary in a rural district is \$14,000 lower than the state average, making it hard to recruit and retain teachers in those districts.

## Senate Action

**Senate Education Committee (March 3, 2016).** At the hearing, representatives from the DHE, Colorado Association of School Boards, Colorado Children's Campaign, Colorado Rural Schools Alliance, Colorado Association of School Executives, Colorado Boards of Cooperative Educational Services, Western State Colorado University, and several members of the public spoke in support of the bill. The committee passed five amendments to the bill. Amendment L.007 limited the number and amount of stipends that can be awarded annually to teachers completing their education as nationally board certified teachers, and added requirements for teachers who receive a stipend. Amendment L.008 added charter schools to the teacher cadet program, amendment L.009 limited the number and amount of stipends that can be awarded annually to student teachers in rural areas, and amendment L.010 updated the definition of "rural school district" and added charter schools to the definition. Amendment L.011 changed the requirement for DHE from establishing four rural education centers, to hiring one rural education coordinator. The committee referred the bill, as amended, to the Committee on Appropriations.

**Senate Appropriations Committee (April 27, 2016).** The committee adopted amendment J.002, which added an appropriation to the bill. The committee referred the bill, as amended, to the Senate Committee of the Whole.

**Senate second reading (April 29, 2016).** The Senate Committee of the Whole adopted the Education and Appropriations committee reports and passed the bill with no amendments.

**Senate third reading (May 2, 2016).** The Senate passed the bill with no amendments.

**Senate consideration of House amendments (May 11, 2016).** The Senate concurred with House amendments to the bill.

## House Action

**House Education Committee (May 9, 2016).** At the hearing, representatives from the Colorado Children's Campaign, DHE, and Deer Trail School District spoke in support of the bill. The committee passed amendment L.013, which required a student teacher who receives a stipend under the program to agree to work in a rural school or school district for at least two years, and referred the bill, as amended, to the Committee on Appropriations.

**House Appropriations Committee (May 9, 2016).** The committee referred the bill to the House Committee of the Whole.

**House second reading (May 10, 2016).** The House Committee of the Whole adopted the education committee report, as well as floor amendment no. 2, which stated that DHE should consider students with disabilities, as well as the geographic, racial, and ethnic diversity of the state, when awarding stipends. The committee passed the bill as amended.

***House third reading (May 11, 2016).*** The House passed third reading amendment no. 1, which allowed DHE to collect reimbursement from a student teacher for a portion of a stipend he or she is awarded if he or she does not teach in a rural school or school district for the required two years upon graduating. The House passed the bill, as amended.