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As of: September 2, 2014 (2:46pm)

LC309c

**** Bill No. ****

Introduced By *****

By Request of the *****

A Bill for an Act entitled: "An Act establishing the school funding interim committee; requiring the committee to conduct a study of the educational needs and costs related to the basic system of free quality public elementary and secondary schools; providing for committee membership; requiring issuance of a report; appropriating \$250,000 from the general fund to the legislative services division for support of the committee and any contracted services; and providing an immediate effective date; and providing a termination date."

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Montana:

NEW SECTION. **Section 1. School funding interim committee.**

(1) There is a school funding interim committee. Pursuant to 20-9-309(5), the committee shall:

(a) conduct a study to reassess the educational needs and costs related to the basic system of free quality public elementary and secondary schools; and

(b) if necessary, recommend to the 65th legislature changes to the state's funding formula.

(2) In conducting the study, the committee may:

(a) review the work and conclusions of the quality schools interim committee established in 2005;

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(b) review how the state's education funding policy has evolved as a result of litigation;

(c) consider any recommendations provided by other interim or standing legislative committees;

(d) seek input from representatives from the board of public education, the office of public instruction, the governor's office, private organizations, professional educators, school trustees, and members of the public;

(e) consider the state's existing and projected financial resources as well as the needs and concerns of Montana taxpayers;

(f) authorize research and studies to be conducted by reputable and reliable experts in the public or private sectors;

(g) request research and analysis from the legislative fiscal division, the office of public instruction, the department of revenue, and any other state agency or entity that maintains information or data relevant to the study; and

(h) consider topics of previous studies, topics explored by previous interim committees, and topics brought forward by the public, including but not limited to:

(i) school district fund structure;

(ii) school funding revenue sources;

(iii) school transportation;

(iv) the cost of changes to school accreditation standards;

(v) preschool program funding;

(vi) expanding school choice opportunities for parents and students;

(vii) federal funding for schools;

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(viii) increasing flexibility for school districts;
(ix) equity in revenue capacity among school districts;
(x) increasing utilization of digital learning;
(xi) special education funding;
(xii) the role of permissive and voted levies;
(xiii) the impacts of athletics on school funding;
(xiv) medical insurance costs for school district employees; and

(xv) the impact on school funding resulting from tax increment finance districts and tax abatements.

(3) The members of the committee are:

(a) four members of the house of representatives, two from each party, appointed by the speaker of the house in consultation with the house majority leader and the house minority leader;

(b) four members of the senate, two from each party, appointed by the president of the senate; and

(c) as ex-officio, nonvoting members:

(i) the presiding officer of the board of public education or the presiding officer's designee;

(ii) the superintendent of public instruction or the superintendent's designee; and

(iii) the governor or the governor's designee.

(4) The committee shall select its presiding officer from among the voting members at the first meeting of the committee.

(5) The committee is attached for administrative purposes to the legislative services division.

(6) On or before September 15, 2016, the committee shall

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issue a report on the committee's findings and recommendations.

NEW SECTION. **Section 2. Appropriation.** There is appropriated \$250,000 from the general fund to the legislative services division for the biennium beginning July 1, 2015, to support the activities of the committee and any contracted services the committee considers to be warranted.

NEW SECTION. **Section 3. {standard} Effective date.** [This act] is effective on passage and approval.

NEW SECTION. **Section 4. {standard} Termination.** [This act] terminates June 30, 2017.

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