



BRAD LITTLE
GOVERNOR

April 20, 2021

The Honorable Janice McGeachin
President of the Senate
Idaho Legislature
Boise, ID 83720

VIA HAND DELIVERY

Dear Madam President,

I hereby advise you that I have transmitted to the Office of the Secretary of State, with my signature, the following Senate Bill, to wit:

S 1045

within the time prescribed by law, the same having arrived in the Office of the Governor at the hour of 2:00 p.m. on April 14, 2021.

As Governor, I have taken several opportunities to write to you on other bills that I have signed into law where I expressed my concern about transparent budgeting and funding sources for legislative policy priorities.

Every year the Advanced Opportunities program has been in place, the fiscal impact has increased, with the Legislature appropriating additional funds during the session but additional money being withdrawn from the Public Education Stabilization Fund (PESF) at the end of the year to cover increases in this entitlement.

When it was enacted during the 2015 session, the Advanced Opportunities program had an estimated fiscal impact of \$5.4 million for Fiscal Year 2016. In Fiscal Year 2020, \$18 million was appropriated to cover the costs of the program and an additional \$5.2 million had to be withdrawn from PESF to cover the entire cost of the program at year's end. We are still waiting to see the current-year impact to PESF, and \$20 million was appropriated in Fiscal Year 2021. I recommended an additional \$9.7 million in my Fiscal Year 2022 budget to avert a PESF withdrawal next year.

I worry about expanding the Advanced Opportunities program again when we still do not have fiscal control over the existing program. In the future, we need to sharpen the goals of the

Advanced Opportunities program and refine the program to align proven strategies with our state's larger post-secondary goals.

The legislation, as written, creates some issues that need to be addressed through the placement of the program in the appropriate budget.

Specifically, this legislation creates a new section of code in Title 33, Chapter 46 for non-public school students, which would create a statutory entitlement if placed in the K-12 budget. Section 33-1002 specifies that Advanced Opportunities will trigger a withdrawal from PESF in any year when the overall public schools appropriation is less than the distributions. If this program were placed in the State Board of Education's budget or the State Department of Education's budget, the amount could be limited to the appropriation only. That way, the true cost of the program is transparent and above board.

In signing this into law, I respectfully request the Legislature place this program's appropriation in the State Board or the State Department budget, aligning it with the sponsors' intent that the program be subject to appropriation each year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Brad Little", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Brad Little
Governor of Idaho

Cc: Secretary of State