

Department of Planning and Budget 2020 Fiscal Impact Statement

1. Bill Number: SB132

House of Origin ☒ Introduced ☐ Substitute ☐ Engrossed
Second House ☐ In Committee ☐ Substitute ☐ Enrolled

2. Patron: Chase

3. Committee: Education and Health

4. Title: Public schools; electives on the Hebrew Scriptures/Old Testament and the New Testament.

5. Summary: Requires the Board of Education to authorize local school boards to offer as an elective in grades nine through 12 with appropriate credits toward graduation a course on the Hebrew Scriptures/Old Testament of the Bible or the New Testament of the Bible or a combined course on both. The bill requires the Board of Education to develop Standards of Learning and curriculum guidelines for such courses. The bill provides that the purpose of such courses is to introduce students to biblical content, characters, poetry, and narratives that are prerequisites to understanding contemporary society and culture, including literature, art, music, mores, oratory, and public policy. The bill prohibits students from being required to use a specific translation of a religious text when taking the courses and provides that such courses shall maintain religious neutrality and shall not endorse, favor, promote, disfavor, or show hostility toward any particular religion or nonreligious perspective.

6. Budget Amendment Necessary: Yes, Item 137.

7. Fiscal Impact Estimates: Preliminary. See Item 8.

7a. Expenditure Impact:

| <i>Fiscal Year</i> | <i>Dollars</i> | <i>Positions</i> | <i>Fund</i> |
|--------------------|----------------|------------------|--------------|
| 2020 | \$0 | 0 | N/A |
| 2021 | \$80,000 | 0 | General Fund |

8. Fiscal Implications: The bill requires the Board of Education (Board) to develop Standards of Learning for an elective course on the Hebrew Scriptures/Old Testament of the Bible or the New Testament of the Bible or a combined course on both. Based on a comprehensive assessment of the work required to develop such standards, the Department of Education (DOE) anticipates the need to assemble a group of subject-matter experts over multiple days to develop the standards and curriculum guidelines for such courses. Based on previous work of this nature, DOE estimates an additional state cost of \$80,000 in FY 2021 to meet the provisions of this bill.

DOE notes that the Board does not develop Standards of Learning for elective courses. Developing Standards of Learning for this elective course may create an expectation that the Board should develop Standards for all elective courses, which could increase future state costs.

9. Specific Agency or Political Subdivisions Affected: Board of Education, Department of Education, local school divisions

10. Technical Amendment Necessary: No

11. Other Comments: None