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Critchfield Submits Annual Public Schools and Department of Education Budget Proposals

(BOISE) – Superintendent of Public Instruction Debbie Critchfield today submitted her annual budget proposals. The K-12 and Idaho Department of Education proposals are due each year to the governor’s budget office and Legislative Services Office by September 1.

The K-12 budget – which represents most of the dollars used to fund public education across the state – includes a 2.6 percent general fund increase.

“This budget represents a balance between strategic investments in our K-12 public schools with spending targets that have made Idaho fiscally responsible,” Critchfield said. “Our revenue projections are down as a state and this proposal represents a modest increase that will accompany a legislative proposal to change the distribution of existing dollars. We can provide more money for districts with small increases when we honor local control and allow districts and charters to use their dollars more effectively.”

The proposal includes funding for three of the superintendent’s top education priorities, including \$24 million in weighted per-student funding. This would increase the state funds provided to schools for certain classifications of students, including special education, English Language Learners and economically disadvantaged students.

“This request acknowledges a reality educators have known for years – it just costs more to educate and support some students,” Critchfield said. “A move to this type of funding model provides districts with a per-student amount that more closely reflects the actual costs they’re incurring. It also gives our local trustees more flexibility in how they spend their state education dollars to reflect the specific needs of their schools.”

The budget proposal also includes a \$13 million request to update the state’s student transportation funding formula. The request would simplify Idaho’s current complex distribution formula by providing a flat reimbursement rate based on mileage and ridership. It would also implement statewide school bus routing software to improve data accuracy, reporting consistency and efficiency with state dollars.

A \$3 million request would create a Special Needs Student Fund to address the financial burden placed on schools for educating high-cost students. Currently, Idaho and Hawaii are the only two states without a mechanism to offset costs associated with certain types of special needs.

“Public schools are required to accept and educate all students,” Critchfield said. “Local budgets aren’t built to accommodate special circumstances where costs can be tens of thousands of dollars, for our most vulnerable students. The availability of these dollars would be especially helpful in rural districts where special needs situations can place greater stress on smaller budgets and reduced staff resources.”

The K-12 budget request totals \$3.3 billion.

The Department of Education’s annual budget request totals \$48.1 million and includes funding for a new Indian Education coordinator position, as well as two new special education positions. One of those would help the department address a significant increase in special education dispute resolution cases over the last several years.

The governor’s office and Legislative Services Office will spend the next several months going over the various state agency proposals ahead of the 2025 legislative session in January.

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