

HOUSE BILL NO. 587

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A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT GENERALLY REVISING SCHOOL FINANCE LAWS; ESTABLISHING A SCHOOL EQUALIZATION AND PROPERTY TAX REDUCTION ACCOUNT IN THE STATE SPECIAL REVENUE FUND; PROVIDING THAT THE REVENUE FROM THE SCHOOL EQUALIZATION LEVIES IS DEPOSITED IN THE ACCOUNT AND THAT THE ACCOUNT IS THE SECOND SOURCE OF FUNDING FOR STATE EQUALIZATION AID FOLLOWING THE GUARANTEE ACCOUNT; PROVIDING ADJUSTMENTS TO SCHOOL FUNDING EQUALIZATION MECHANISMS BASED ON REVENUE DEPOSITED IN THE ACCOUNT; INCREASING THE COUNTY RETIREMENT GTB MULTIPLIER TO LOWER COUNTY PROPERTY TAXES; CLARIFYING AND PROVIDING A CAP ON BASE GTB ADJUSTMENTS FROM MARIJUANA REVENUE; REVISING DEFINITIONS; AMENDING SECTIONS 20-9-331, 20-9-333, 20-9-360, 20-9-366, 20-9-525, AND 20-9-622, MCA; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE."

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

**NEW SECTION. Section 1. School equalization and property tax reduction account -- uses. (1)**

There is a school equalization and property tax reduction account in the state special revenue fund. Contingent on appropriation by the legislature, money in the account is for distribution to school districts as the second source of funding for state equalization aid as provided in 20-9-343. At fiscal yearend, any fund balance in the account exceeding what was appropriated must be transferred to the guarantee account established in 20-9-622.

(2) The account receives revenue as described in 20-9-331, 20-9-333, and 20-9-360.

(3) Beginning in fiscal year 2025, each December the superintendent of public instruction shall forecast the amount of revenue the account will receive in that fiscal year by dividing the sum of the taxable value of all property in the state reported by the department of revenue pursuant to 20-9-369 by 1,000 to

1 determine a statewide value mill and then multiplying that amount by 95 mills, or the number of mills calculated  
2 by the department of revenue under 15-10-420(8) for the applicable fiscal year. If the forecasted amount differs  
3 from the amount determined through the same calculation in the prior fiscal year by \$2 million or more and is:

4 (a) less, then the superintendent shall:

5 (i) decrease the multiplier used to calculate the statewide elementary and high school guaranteed  
6 tax base ratios used for funding BASE budgets under 20-9-366 to the nearest whole number determined by the  
7 superintendent to result in a decrease in the amount of guaranteed tax base aid distributed to eligible school  
8 districts equal to 85% of the decrease in the calculated amount between the 2 years; and

9 (ii) decrease the multiplier used to calculate the statewide elementary and high school mill value  
10 per ANB for school retirement guaranteed tax base purposes under 20-9-366 to the nearest whole number  
11 determined by the superintendent to result in a decrease in the amount of retirement guaranteed tax base aid  
12 distributed to eligible school districts equal to 15% of the decrease in the calculated amount between the 2  
13 years;

14 (b) more, then the superintendent shall increase the multipliers used in the guaranteed tax base  
15 formulas under 20-9-366 and in the formula for school major maintenance aid under 20-9-525 to the nearest  
16 whole number by an amount calculated by the superintendent to result in an increase in the amount of  
17 guaranteed tax base aid and school major maintenance aid distributed to eligible counties and school districts  
18 equal to ~~one-third~~ 55% of the increase in the calculated amount between the 2 years in the following order, with  
19 any amount exceeding the caps under subsections (3)(b)(i) through (3)(b)(iii) flowing to the next mechanism:

20 (i) first, the multiplier used in calculating the statewide mill value per elementary and high school  
21 ANB for retirement purposes, not to exceed 305%;

22 (ii) second, the multiplier used in calculating the amount of state school major maintenance aid  
23 support for each dollar of local effort, not to exceed 365%; and

24 (iii) third, the multiplier used in calculating the facility guaranteed mill value per ANB for school  
25 facility entitlement guaranteed tax base purposes, not to exceed 300%.

26 (4) (a) The adjustments to the multipliers under subsection (3) are applicable to state equalization  
27 aid distributions in the fiscal year following the adjustment.

28 (b) Adjustments to the multipliers made under subsection (3) remain in effect in subsequent years

1 unless further changed under 20-9-366 or subsection (3) of this section or as otherwise provided by law.

2

3 **Section 2.** Section 20-9-331, MCA, is amended to read:

4 **"20-9-331. Basic county tax for elementary equalization and other revenue for county**

5 **equalization of elementary BASE funding program.** (1) Subject to 15-10-420, the county commissioners of

6 each county shall levy an annual basic county tax of 33 mills on the dollar of the taxable value of all taxable

7 property within the county, except for property subject to a tax or fee under 61-3-321(2) or (3), 61-3-529, 61-3-

8 537, 61-3-562, 61-3-570, and 67-3-204, for the purposes of elementary equalization and state BASE funding

9 program support. The revenue collected from this levy must be apportioned to the support of the elementary

10 BASE funding programs of the school districts in the county and to the ~~state general fund~~ school equalization

11 and property tax reduction account established in [section 1] in the following manner:

12 (a) In order to determine the amount of revenue raised by this levy that is retained by the county,  
13 the sum of the estimated revenue identified in subsection (2) must be subtracted from the total of the BASE  
14 funding programs of all elementary districts of the county.

15 (b) If the basic levy and other revenue prescribed by this section produce more revenue than is  
16 required to repay a state advance for county equalization, the county treasurer shall remit the surplus funds to  
17 the department of revenue, as provided in 15-1-504, for deposit to the state general fund immediately upon  
18 occurrence of a surplus balance and each subsequent month, with any final remittance due no later than June  
19 20 of the fiscal year for which the levy has been set.

20 (2) The revenue realized from the county's portion of the levy prescribed by this section and the  
21 revenue from the following sources must be used for the equalization of the elementary BASE funding program  
22 of the county as prescribed in 20-9-335, and a separate accounting must be kept of the revenue by the county  
23 treasurer in accordance with 20-9-212(1):

24 (a) the portion of the federal Taylor Grazing Act funds designated for the elementary county  
25 equalization fund under the provisions of 17-3-222;

26 (b) the portion of the federal flood control act funds distributed to a county and designated for  
27 expenditure for the benefit of the county common schools under the provisions of 17-3-232;

28 (c) all money paid into the county treasury as a result of fines for violations of law, except money

- 1 paid to a justice's court, and the use of which is not otherwise specified by law;
- 2 (d) any money remaining at the end of the immediately preceding school fiscal year in the county
- 3 treasurer's accounts for the various sources of revenue established or referred to in this section;
- 4 (e) any federal or state money distributed to the county as payment in lieu of property taxation,
- 5 including federal forest reserve funds allocated under the provisions of 17-3-213;
- 6 (f) gross proceeds taxes from coal under 15-23-703; and
- 7 (g) oil and natural gas production taxes."

8

9 **Section 3.** Section 20-9-333, MCA, is amended to read:

10 **"20-9-333. Basic county tax for high school equalization and other revenue for county**

11 **equalization of high school BASE funding program.** (1) Subject to 15-10-420, the county commissioners of

12 each county shall levy an annual basic county tax of 22 mills on the dollar of the taxable value of all taxable

13 property within the county, except for property subject to a tax or fee under 61-3-321(2) or (3), 61-3-529, 61-3-

14 537, 61-3-562, 61-3-570, and 67-3-204, for the purposes of high school equalization and state BASE funding

15 program support. The revenue collected from this levy must be apportioned to the support of the BASE funding

16 programs of high school districts in the county and to the ~~state general fund~~ school equalization and property

17 tax reduction account established in [section 1] in the following manner:

18 (a) In order to determine the amount of revenue raised by this levy that is retained by the county,

19 the sum of the estimated revenue identified in subsection (2) must be subtracted from the sum of the county's

20 high school tuition obligation and the total of the BASE funding programs of all high school districts of the

21 county.

22 (b) If the basic levy and other revenue prescribed by this section produce more revenue than is

23 required to repay a state advance for county equalization, the county treasurer shall remit the surplus funds to

24 the department of revenue, as provided in 15-1-504, for deposit to the state general fund immediately upon

25 occurrence of a surplus balance and each subsequent month, with any final remittance due no later than June

26 20 of the fiscal year for which the levy has been set.

27 (2) The revenue realized from the county's portion of the levy prescribed in this section and the

28 revenue from the following sources must be used for the equalization of the high school BASE funding program

1 of the county as prescribed in 20-9-335, and a separate accounting must be kept of the revenue by the county  
2 treasurer in accordance with 20-9-212(1):

3 (a) any money remaining at the end of the immediately preceding school fiscal year in the county  
4 treasurer's accounts for the various sources of revenue established in this section;

5 (b) any federal or state money distributed to the county as payment in lieu of property taxation,  
6 including federal forest reserve funds allocated under the provisions of 17-3-213;

7 (c) gross proceeds taxes from coal under 15-23-703; and

8 (d) oil and natural gas production taxes."

9

10 **Section 4.** Section 20-9-360, MCA, is amended to read:

11 **"20-9-360. State equalization aid levy.** Subject to 15-10-420, there is a levy of 40 mills imposed by  
12 the county commissioners of each county on all taxable property within the state, except property for which a  
13 tax or fee is required under 61-3-321(2) or (3), 61-3-529, 61-3-537, 61-3-562, 61-3-570, and 67-3-204.

14 Proceeds of the levy must be remitted to the department of revenue, as provided in 15-1-504, and must be  
15 deposited to the credit of the ~~state school general equalization fund and property tax reduction account~~  
16 established in [section 1] for state equalization aid to the public schools of Montana."

17

18 **Section 5.** Section 20-9-366, MCA, is amended to read:

19 **"20-9-366. Definitions.** ~~As Subject to adjustments pursuant to [section 1], as~~ used in 20-9-366  
20 through 20-9-371, the following definitions apply:

21 (1) "County retirement mill value per elementary ANB" or "county retirement mill value per high  
22 school ANB" means the sum of the taxable valuation in the previous year of all property in the county divided by  
23 1,000, with the quotient divided by the total county elementary ANB count or the total county high school ANB  
24 count used to calculate the elementary school districts' and high school districts' prior year total per-ANB  
25 entitlement amounts.

26 (2) (a) "District guaranteed tax base ratio" for guaranteed tax base funding for the BASE budget of  
27 an eligible district means the taxable valuation in the previous year of all property in the district, except for  
28 property value disregarded because of protested taxes under 15-1-409(2) or property subject to the creation of

1 a new school district under 20-6-326, divided by the district's prior year GTBA budget area.

2 (b) "District mill value per ANB", for school facility entitlement purposes, means the taxable  
3 valuation in the previous year of all property in the district, except for property subject to the creation of a new  
4 school district under 20-6-326, divided by 1,000, with the quotient divided by the ANB count of the district used  
5 to calculate the district's prior year total per-ANB entitlement amount.

6 (3) "Facility guaranteed mill value per ANB", for school facility entitlement guaranteed tax base  
7 purposes, means, subject to adjustment under [section 1], the sum of the taxable valuation in the previous year  
8 of all property in the state, multiplied by 140% and divided by 1,000, with the quotient divided by the total state  
9 elementary ANB count or the total state high school ANB count used to calculate the elementary school  
10 districts' and high school districts' prior year total per-ANB entitlement amounts.

11 (4) "Guaranteed tax base aid budget area" or "GTBA budget area" means the portion of a district's  
12 BASE budget after the following payments are subtracted:

- 13 (a) direct state aid;
- 14 (b) the total data-for-achievement payment;
- 15 (c) the total quality educator payment;
- 16 (d) the total at-risk student payment;
- 17 (e) the total Indian education for all payment;
- 18 (f) the total American Indian achievement gap payment; and
- 19 (g) the state special education allowable cost payment.

20 (5) (a) ~~Except as provided in subsection (6),~~ "Statewide elementary guaranteed tax base ratio" or  
21 "statewide high school guaranteed tax base ratio", for guaranteed tax base funding for the BASE budget of an  
22 eligible district, means, subject to adjustment under [section 1], the sum of the taxable valuation in the previous  
23 year of all property in the state, multiplied by ~~250% for fiscal year 2022 and 254% for fiscal year 2023 and each~~  
24 ~~successing fiscal year~~ and divided by the prior year statewide GTBA budget area for the state elementary  
25 school districts or the state high school districts. For fiscal year 2024 and subsequent fiscal years, the  
26 superintendent of public instruction shall increase the multiplier, not to exceed 262%, in this subsection (5)(a)  
27 as follows:

28 (i) for fiscal years 2024 through 2031, if the revenue transferred to the state general fund pursuant

1 to 16-12-111 in the prior fiscal year is at least \$1 million more than the revenue transferred in the fiscal year 2  
2 years prior, then:

3 (A) multiply the amount of increased revenue transferred to the state general fund pursuant to 16-  
4 12-111 in the prior fiscal year above the amount of revenue transferred in the fiscal year 2 years prior by 0.25,  
5 divide the resulting product by \$500,000, and round to the nearest whole number; and

6 (B) add the number derived in subsection (5)(a)(i)(A) as a percentage point increase to:

7 ~~(I) if the prior year was not affected by a contingency under subsection (6), the multiplier used for the~~  
8 ~~prior fiscal year; or~~

9 ~~(II) if the prior year was affected by a contingency under subsection (6), the multiplier for the prior fiscal~~  
10 ~~year had the prior fiscal year not been affected by a contingency under subsection (6);~~

11 (ii) for fiscal years 2024 through 2031, if the revenue transferred to the state general fund pursuant  
12 to 16-12-111 in the prior fiscal year is less than \$1 million more than the revenue transferred in the fiscal year 2  
13 years prior, then the multiplier is equal to:

14 ~~(A) if the prior year was not affected by a contingency under subsection (6), the multiplier used for the~~  
15 ~~prior fiscal year; or~~

16 ~~(B) if the prior year was affected by a contingency under subsection (6), the multiplier for the prior~~  
17 ~~fiscal year had the prior fiscal year not been affected by a contingency under subsection (6); and~~

18 (iii) for fiscal years 2032 and subsequent fiscal years, the multiplier is equal to the multiplier used  
19 for fiscal year 2031; and

20 (iv) for all multiplier increases under this subsection (5)(a), the calculations are made in the year  
21 prior to the year in which the increase to the multiplier takes effect and impacts distribution of guaranteed tax  
22 base aid.

23 (b) ~~statewide~~ Statewide mill value per elementary ANB" or "statewide mill value per high school  
24 ANB", for school retirement guaranteed tax base purposes, means, subject to adjustment under [section 1], the  
25 sum of the taxable valuation in the previous year of all property in the state, multiplied by ~~421%~~ 189% and  
26 divided by 1,000, with the quotient divided by the total state elementary ANB count or the total state high school  
27 ANB amount used to calculate the elementary school districts' and high school districts' prior year total per-ANB  
28 entitlement amounts.

1           ~~(6) The guaranteed tax base multiplier under subsection (5)(a) must be reduced by 4 percentage~~  
2 ~~points following certification by the budget director of a contingency pursuant to Chapter 506, Laws of 2021:~~  
3           ~~(a) for fiscal year 2023 if the certification is made during calendar year 2021;~~  
4           ~~(b) for fiscal year 2024 if the certification is made during calendar year 2022;~~  
5           ~~(c) for fiscal year 2025 if the certification is made during calendar year 2023; and~~  
6           ~~(d) for fiscal year 2026 if the certification is made during calendar year 2024."~~

7

8           **Section 6.** Section 20-9-525, MCA, is amended to read:

9           **"20-9-525. School major maintenance aid account -- formula.** (1) There is a school major  
10 maintenance aid account in the state special revenue fund provided for in 17-2-102.

11           (2) The purpose of the account is to provide, contingent on appropriation from the legislature,  
12 funding for school major maintenance aid as provided in subsection (3) for school facility projects, including the  
13 payment of principal and interest on obligations issued pursuant to 20-9-471 for school facility projects, that  
14 support a basic system of free quality public elementary and secondary schools under 20-9-309, including but  
15 not limited to:

16           (a) improvements to school and student safety and security as described in 20-9-236(1); and  
17           (b) projects designed to produce operational efficiencies such as utility savings, reduced future  
18 maintenance costs, improved utilization of staff, and enhanced learning environments for students, including  
19 but not limited to projects addressing:

- 20           (i) roofing systems;
- 21           (ii) heating, air-conditioning, and ventilation systems;
- 22           (iii) energy-efficient window and door systems and insulation;
- 23           (iv) plumbing systems;
- 24           (v) electrical systems and lighting systems;
- 25           (vi) information technology infrastructure, including internet connectivity both within and to the  
26 school facility; and
- 27           (vii) other critical repairs to an existing school facility or facilities.

28           (3) (a) In any year in which the legislature has appropriated funds for distribution from the school



1 major maintenance aid account, the superintendent of public instruction shall administer the distribution of  
2 school major maintenance aid from the school major maintenance aid account for deposit in the subfund of the  
3 building reserve fund provided for in 20-9-502(3)(e). Subject to proration under subsection (5) of this section,  
4 aid must be annually distributed no later than the last working day of May to a school district imposing a levy  
5 pursuant to 20-9-502(3) in the current school fiscal year, with the amount of state support per dollar of local  
6 effort of the applicable elementary and high school program of each district determined as follows:

7 (i) using the taxable valuation most recently determined by the department of revenue under 20-9-  
8 369:

9 (A) divide the total statewide taxable valuation by the statewide total of school major maintenance  
10 amounts and, subject to adjustment under [section 1], multiply the result by 187%;

11 (B) multiply the result determined under subsection (3)(a)(i)(A) by the district's school major  
12 maintenance amount;

13 (C) subtract the district's taxable valuation from the amount determined under subsection  
14 (3)(a)(i)(B); and

15 (D) divide the amount determined under subsection (3)(a)(i)(C) by 1,000;

16 (ii) determine the greater of the amount determined in subsection (3)(a)(i) or 18% of the district's  
17 mill value;

18 (iii) multiply the result determined under subsection (3)(a)(ii) by the district's school major  
19 maintenance amount, then divide the product by the sum of the result determined under subsection (3)(a)(ii)  
20 and the district's mill value; and

21 (iv) divide the result determined under subsection (3)(a)(iii) by the difference resulting from  
22 subtracting the result determined under subsection (3)(a)(iii) from the district's school major maintenance  
23 amount.

24 (b) For a district with an adopted general fund budget in the prior year greater than or equal to  
25 97% of the district's general fund maximum budget in the prior year, the amount determined in subsection  
26 (3)(a)(iv) rounded to the nearest cent is the amount of school major maintenance aid per dollar of local effort,  
27 not to exceed an amount that would result in the state aid composing more than 80% of the district's school  
28 major maintenance amount.

1 (c) For a district with an adopted general fund budget in the prior year less than 97% of the  
2 district's maximum budget in the prior year, multiply the amount determined in subsection (3)(a)(iv) by the ratio  
3 of the district's adopted general fund budget in the prior year to the district's maximum general fund budget in  
4 the prior year. The result, rounded to the nearest cent, is the amount of state school major maintenance aid per  
5 dollar of local effort, not to exceed an amount that would result in the state aid composing more than 80% of the  
6 district's school major maintenance amount.

7 (4) Using the taxable valuation most recently determined by the department of revenue under 20-  
8 9-369, the superintendent shall provide school districts with a preliminary estimated amount of state school  
9 major maintenance aid per dollar of local effort for the ensuing school year no later than March 1 and a final  
10 amount for the current school year no later than July 31.

11 (5) If the appropriation from or the available funds in the school major maintenance aid account in  
12 any school fiscal year are less than the amount for which school districts would otherwise qualify, the  
13 superintendent of public instruction shall proportionally prorate the aid distributed to ensure that the distributions  
14 do not exceed the appropriated or available funds.

15 (6) If in any fiscal year the amount of revenue in the school major maintenance aid account is  
16 sufficient to fund school major maintenance aid without a proration reduction pursuant to subsection (5) and if in  
17 that same fiscal year the amount of revenue available in the school facility and technology account established  
18 in 20-9-516 will result in a proration reduction in debt service assistance pursuant to 20-9-346(2)(b) for that  
19 fiscal year, the state treasurer shall transfer any excess funds in the school major maintenance aid account to  
20 the school facility and technology account, not to exceed the amount required to avoid a proration reduction.

21 (7) For the purposes of this section, the following definitions apply:

22 (a) "Local effort" means an amount of money raised by levying no more than 10 mills pursuant to  
23 20-9-502(3) and, provided that 10 mills have been levied, any additional amount of money deposited or  
24 transferred by trustees to the subfund pursuant to 20-9-502(3).

25 (b) "School major maintenance amount" means the sum of \$15,000 and the product of \$110  
26 multiplied by the district's budgeted ANB for the prior fiscal year."

27

28 **Section 7.** Section 20-9-622, MCA, is amended to read:

1           **"20-9-622. Guarantee account.** (1) There is a guarantee account in the state special revenue fund.

2           The guarantee account is intended to:

3           (a)       stabilize the long-term growth of the permanent fund; and

4           (b)       maintain a constant and increasing distributable revenue stream. All realized capital gains and  
5           all distributable revenue must be deposited in the guarantee account. The guarantee account is statutorily  
6           appropriated, as provided in 17-7-502, for distribution to school districts ~~through school~~ as the first source of  
7           funding for state equalization aid as provided in 20-9-343.

8           (2)       Any excess interest and income revenue deposited in the guarantee account for distribution  
9           under this section must be transferred to the school major maintenance aid account provided for in 20-9-525."

10

11           NEW SECTION. Section 8. Codification instruction. [Section 1] is intended to be codified as an  
12           integral part of Title 20, chapter 9, part 3, and the provisions of Title 20, chapter 9, part 3, apply to [section 1].

13

14           NEW SECTION. Section 9. Effective date. [This act] is effective July 1, 2023.

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