

## **STARS ACT**

House Bill 252 (HB252), introduced in the 2025 Montana legislative session, is a **comprehensive school funding and staffing reform bill** designed to address key challenges facing Montana schools—especially around **teacher recruitment, retention, and funding equity**.

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### **Key Elements of HB252 Relevant to Funding and Staffing**

#### **1. Enhanced Incentives for Teacher Base Pay**

- Sets **state-supported goals** for increasing starting teacher pay.
- Beginning in FY2026, districts that **meet starting salary targets** (e.g., 11× the quality educator payment) receive **enhanced quality educator and staff payments**.
- Phased-in targets increase over time (e.g., 62% of average salary in FY26, rising to 70% by FY30).

#### **2. Inclusion of Additional Staff in Funding Formulas**

- Expands the **Quality Educator and Qualified Staff Payment** to include:
  - **Clerks** performing defined fiscal and administrative duties.
  - **Staff working under emergency authorization**.
- Increases funding for **early-career teachers**, especially those in the first 3 years.

#### **3. Incentives for Resource Sharing**

- Districts that **share staff** (e.g., jointly employ teachers or specialists) can count shared personnel as full-time equivalents **in each district** for funding purposes.

#### **4. "Future Ready" Graduation Incentives**

- Launches in FY2028.
- Pays districts for **graduates who earn college or CTE credits** while in high school.
- Tiered payments based on levels of achievement (e.g., associate's degree, 15–30 college credits, or equivalent etc.).

#### **5. Advanced Opportunity and Transformational Learning Funding**

- **Restores full funding** to these innovative programs.
- Supports **dual credit, CTE, and student-centered learning models**.

#### **6. Housing Budget Authority Increases**








- Districts in high-cost housing areas can increase **maximum general fund budgets**, with a voted levy.
- Additional funds must be spent on **housing supports for staff**—stipends, relocation assistance, district-owned housing, etc.

#### **7. School Funding Dashboard**

- Legislative Fiscal Analysts must create an **interactive dashboard** to increase **transparency and understanding** of school funding data.

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## ✓ Pros – Why You Might Support HB252

Benefit	Impact
 <b>Incentivizes Higher Teacher Pay</b>	Encourages competitive salaries to improve recruitment and retention.
 <b>Brings More Money to Schools</b>	Increases state aid, adds funding pathways for innovative programs, staffing, and housing.
 <b>Expands Funding to More Staff</b>	Includes clerks and emergency-authorized staff in funding formulas—acknowledges their critical role.
 <b>Invests in Student Futures</b>	Supports career/college readiness, dual credit, and CTE through the Future Ready and Advanced Opportunity programs.
 <b>Helps with Housing Affordability</b>	Budget authority increases target housing—a known barrier to retaining staff in certain areas.
 <b>Supports Collaboration</b>	Rewards shared staffing between districts, easing workforce shortages.
 <b>Increases Accountability &amp; Transparency</b>	Public funding dashboard empowers better community and policy engagement.

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## Talking Points for Staff & Community

- “This bill helps us **pay teachers more**, which directly supports our ability to attract and keep great educators.”
  - “HB252 **increases our school’s funding** based on innovative programs, student achievement, and district collaboration.”
  - “By including **emergency-authorized staff and clerks**, the bill recognizes all the people doing the work in our schools.”
  - “It also acknowledges the cost of housing and provides budget flexibility to help staff live in the communities they serve.”
  - “Ultimately, this bill is about ensuring our kids have access to **qualified teachers, meaningful opportunities, and a strong public education system.**”
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