

Senate Fiscal Agency  
P. O. Box 30036  
Lansing, Michigan 48909-7536

**SFA**



**BILL ANALYSIS**

Telephone: (517) 373-5383  
Fax: (517) 373-1986  
TDD: (517) 373-0543

House Bill 5740 (Substitute H-3 as reported without amendment)  
Sponsor: Representative Gerald Van Woerkom  
House Committee: Education  
Senate Committee: Education

Date Completed: 6-20-00

### **RATIONALE**

Students today face many social pressures and individual problems that can have an effect on the overall safety of the schools they attend. Furthermore, children affected by these kinds of problems often are not able to achieve to their academic potential. School counselors provide individual and group counseling to assist students who feel alienation and anxiety about school, or who need counseling support so they may be successful in school. Michigan's current ratio of students to school counselors is 638 students to one counselor, while the national average is 561 students to one counselor. Michigan reportedly ranks 42nd among the 50 states in its student-to-counselor ratio. Moreover, the total number of school counselors in the State reportedly has declined 13% since 1993, despite a rise during that period in the number of students attending school. Under the Revised School Code, an individual must be a teacher and possess an endorsement by the State Board of Education in order to serve in a counseling role, as defined by the State Board. Some people believe that, to expand the pool of available counselors, the State should allow persons who meet certain educational and experiential requirements to serve as counselors in Michigan's schools.

### **CONTENT**

The bill would amend the Revised School Code replace the provision under which the board of a school district or intermediate school district (ISD) may not permit a teacher without a State Board of Education endorsement to serve in a counseling role. Instead, the bill provides that the board of a school district or intermediate school district could not allow a person to serve in a counseling role in the school district or ISD unless the person met one or more of the following:

- Held a valid teaching certificate with a school counseling endorsement.
- Met certain educational and experiential requirements, as specified in the bill.

- Had at least five years of experience serving in a school counseling role in another state within the immediately preceding seven-year period and had successfully completed the Department of Education's guidance counselor examination.

Under the proposed educational and experiential requirements, the person would have to hold a master's degree awarded after completion of an approved counselor education program that included skills and content areas or their equivalent as specified in the bill; have completed the Department's guidance counselor examination; and, have been recommended by an approved school counselor education program to provide services as a school counselor. The required skills and content areas, or their equivalent, would include the following: guidance services--philosophy, principles, and practices; individual and group analysis--nature and range of human characteristics and appraisal methods; guidance information--vocational development theory, educational and occupational information; counseling theory and practice--individual and group procedures, administration and coordination relationships, professional relationships, and ethics; supervised experiences--laboratory, practicum, or internship; and, evaluation--statistics and research methodology, follow-up evaluation, and measurement methods.

In addition, the school board or ISD board would have to comply with the Code's requirements that a school board or ISD board request a criminal history check from the Department of State Police or the Federal Bureau of Investigation on an individual seeking employment as a teacher or school administrator, or for a position requiring approval of the State Board of Education.

MCL 380.1233

### **ARGUMENTS**

*(Please note: The arguments contained in this analysis*

*originate from sources outside the Senate Fiscal Agency. The Senate Fiscal Agency neither supports nor opposes legislation.)*

### **Supporting Argument**

There apparently is a shortage in the State of qualified school counselors due to an inadequate applicant pool of certified/endorsed school counselors. Michigan is one of 12 states that require applicants for a school counseling position to hold a valid teaching certificate with a school counseling endorsement. The bill would add two alternatives to this requirement, which would require a person either to meet certain educational and experiential standards or to have served as a school counselor in another state. Although teacher certification can be helpful to counselors when they work in schools, the lack of certification should not preclude the employment of persons who have the education and experience that is appropriate for providing counseling services to students.

**Response:** The State Board of Education recently approved an experimental program that revises certain training requirements and permits preliminary certification of persons who have completed a specified number of hours in a school counselor program. Instead of making statutory changes to the professional standards for school counselors, the State should allow this experimental program to continue as planned under current certification requirements. Furthermore, although people seem to agree that there is a shortage of school counselors, it has not been clearly shown that this shortage is due to the teaching certification requirement. Before revising the standard, the State should establish a desired student-to-counselor ratio, and then determine the best way to achieve it.

### **Opposing Argument**

School counselors should continue to have to hold a valid teaching certificate, regardless of any other counseling-related education or experience they may possess. School counselors in the State spend, on average, approximately 50% of their time in classroom instruction. Many of the services a school counselor provides are an integral part of a school's total educational program. For example, school counselors are expected to interpret the statewide assessment tests, assist with academic planning, ensure that students meet graduation requirements, and help students plan and prepare for their postsecondary education. Thus, school counselors must understand the concepts of teaching as they deliver a comprehensive guidance and counseling program.

**Response:** Under both of the proposed alternatives to holding a teaching certificate, the person would have to pass the Department of Education's guidance counselor examination.

### **Opposing Argument**

A teaching certificate essentially is a license that must be maintained by its holder and can be withdrawn under certain circumstances. This ensures the continuing competency and eligibility of the individual who is certified. The same protection does not exist in the case of a person who is allowed to serve in a particular role simply on the basis of education and experience, or reciprocity with another state.

Legislative Analyst: L. Arasim

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

The bill would have no fiscal impact on State or local government.

Fiscal Analyst: J. Carrasco

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This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan Senate staff for use by the Senate in its deliberations and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.