

SUBSTITUTE TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS

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House Bill 4421 as enacted
Public Act 418 of 2018
Sponsor: Rep. Holly Hughes
House Committee: Education Reform
Senate Committee: Education
Complete to 5-10-19

Analysis available at
<http://www.legislature.mi.gov>

BRIEF SUMMARY: House Bill 4421 amends the Revised School Code to expand the eligibility for substitute teachers to include individuals with expertise in a certain field who would be teaching in that field, as long as they fulfill other education, experience, and certification requirements.

FISCAL IMPACT: The bill would have no fiscal impact for the state or for local school districts, intermediate school districts (ISDs), or public school academies (PSAs).

THE APPARENT PROBLEM:

For several years, Michigan has been suffering from an ongoing teacher shortage, with the need being felt in staffing classes with permanent teachers as well as substitute teachers. In fact, the list of Critical Shortage Disciplines¹ from the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) for the academic year 2016-17 lists “Substitute Teaching—ALL Disciplines” (emphasis in original). According to the bill sponsor, this bill is intended to target disciplines that also appear on the list in their own right, specifically career and technical education (CTE) instructors. Qualified CTE instructors are in high demand, and the bill would recognize that advanced certification in a specialized discipline may be a better indication of expertise for the purpose of teaching CTE courses than college credits.

THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:

Generally, the Revised School Code requires all schools to ensure that their teachers hold a valid teaching certificate (with an exception for schools and teachers in the Detroit Public Schools Community District, established July 1, 2016). However, the board of a school district or intermediate school district (ISD) may employ a person who does not have a teaching certificate to serve as a substitute teacher as long as that person has at least 60 semester hours of college credit or an associate degree from a college, university, or community college.²

In addition to that exception, HB 4421 allows a board to employ a person to be a substitute teacher for a course in an industrial technology education program or a CTE program in a

¹ https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/2016-17_Critical_Shortage_List_518812_7.pdf

² House Fiscal Agency analysis of 2018 PA 236 /House Bill 4069: <http://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/2017-2018/billanalysis/House/pdf/2017-HLA-4069-2C7147E4.pdf>

subject matter or field in which the person has achieved expertise, as determined by the board, as long as the person satisfies all of the following:

- Holds a high school diploma or high school equivalency certificate.
- In subject matters or fields where a professional license or certification is required, either:
 - Holds a professional license or certification issued by Michigan in that same subject matter or field.
 - Previously held such a professional license or certification that had expired within two years before the start of the substitute teaching employment. (The person would need to have been in good standing immediately before the expiration of the license or certification.)
- Has at least two cumulative years of relevant experience in the preceding ten years.

The bill took effect March 20, 2019.

MCL 280.1233

ARGUMENTS:

For:

House Bill 4421 along with House Bills 4069 and 4422 are the latest in a series of bills intended to address Michigan's ongoing teacher shortage. Reportedly, fill rates—or the percentage of substitute teaching positions that are able to be filled—have dropped from 95% in 2012 to 85% in 2015.³ This means that for every 100 classrooms that are in need of substitutes, only 85 are able to be filled. According to committee testimony, approximately 1,200 substitute positions go unfilled each day statewide. Bills such as these are intended to expand the pool of eligible substitutes to fill those vacancies.

Response:

There was a general consensus that the teacher shortage, and specifically the substitute teacher shortage, is a real and growing problem in the state. However, some argued that a deeper assessment into the reasons for that shortage is needed.

According to committee testimony, substitute teachers in Michigan make between \$85 and \$100 a day. So, even if a person substitute teaches each of the 180 days required of Michigan schools, at \$85 a day, that person would make \$15,300 a year, or roughly 129% of the federal poverty level. At this wage, some argued, how can we be surprised that substitute teachers are hard to come by?

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■ This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan House Fiscal Agency staff for use by House members in their deliberations, and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.

³ <http://wkar.org/post/mi-schools-struggle-lack-substitute-teachers#stream/0>