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MICHIGAN SUMMER READING PROGRAM

House Bill 5830 (Substitute H-3) Revised First Analysis (9-29-98)

Sponsor: Rep. Deborah Cherry
Committee: Appropriations

THE APPARENT PROBLEM:

In schoolwork and also in workplaces after school, literacy and numeracy are the keys to success. Children who do not learn to read books early in their school careers face the prospect of difficulty in school, their efforts to learn frustrated by their lack of reading skill. An ability to read the printed word enables a disposition for learning in that it allows learners to direct and sustain their attention to a body of written work; to a particular and coherent set of connected ideas. It is understandable that a student who is unable to read or who reads poorly is far more likely to be truant, and also to leave school before graduation.

Throughout Michigan, school districts and local libraries often offer youngsters summer reading programs in order to encourage kids to explore the world of books when school is not in session. Sometimes schools and libraries work together in close partnerships to design educative sessions, so that elementary school reading programs can continue uninterrupted during summer months. In order to enhance the literacy skills of early elementary school students, most especially those who have had difficulty learning to read, parents too become involved, as they are encouraged to supplement the efforts of school-based reading teachers throughout the school year and extending throughout the summer. Reading teachers, children's librarians, and parents all work together to increase youngsters' reading competence.

Some have argued that the Library of Michigan should play an active and ongoing role as a partner with local summer reading programs. They suggest that the Library of Michigan could provide the various local library reading programs that are offered statewide with centralized coordination, design, and distribution services. They argue that if the 386 local public libraries could avail themselves of these kinds of centralized planning and implementation functions, then young readers and their parents would be ensured a larger number of local reading programs that are designed for struggling readers, programs that will be of a consistent thematic content and of high quality.

They argue further that a state-funded reading program, designed by state and local librarians for use at the local level, would be yet another way for state librarians to share both their expertise and also the library's collections with reading programs throughout the state.

THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:

House Bill 5830 would create a new act to be called the "Michigan Summer Reading Program Act." The bill would appropriate \$500,000 to the state library from the general fund for fiscal year 1998-99, and would direct the state librarian to develop, promote, and maintain summer reading programs through participating public libraries. The summer reading programs would be required to coordinate services and share information with communities and local public schools in order to raise the awareness of the importance of learning to read. The bill would require that the programs primarily serve elementary school-aged children and be designed to assist children in maintaining and developing strong reading skills throughout the summer.

Under House Bill 5830, the funds appropriated for the reading programs could be used to expand and improve existing summer reading programs; to develop and distribute material that raises awareness in the community about the importance of reading; to foster communication between public libraries and surrounding communities, schools, and community organizations about the summer reading programs; to foster cooperation and communication between the state library and other public libraries in order to coordinate the programs and share information concerning summer reading programs; and to pay for the administrative costs of the state library, not to

exceed five percent of the money expended. The funds could not be used to purchase material or equipment that is not directly related to the summer reading program.

House Bill 5830 would require that in September of each year, the state librarian report to the Legislative Council the number of participating public libraries and school-children involved in the programs operated during the preceding June, July, and August. The bill would define "public library" to mean a library recognized by the Legislative Council as lawfully established for purposes of receiving state aid and penal fines.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

As originally introduced, House Bill 5830 would have established a local matching program to provide, among other things, tutors for struggling readers. The bill's sponsor hopes that the summer reading program will expand in future years, and that tutoring will eventually be available during the summer months when schools are not in session.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:

The House Fiscal Agency notes that the fiscal impact of House Bill 5830 would be \$500,000. Primarily, costs would occur as a result of the following requirements: developing and distributing materials that raise awareness in communities about the importance of reading; and coordinating services and sharing information with communities and the approximately 1,400 public elementary schools in the state. (9-22-98)

ARGUMENTS:

For:

There are 386 local public libraries in Michigan, all of which could offer summer reading programs in partnership with the more than 1,400 public elementary schools during the months that school is not in session, if such a statewide program were centrally coordinated. This legislation allows the Library of Michigan to develop a Summer Reading Program, to identify reading materials about a particular theme, to advertise the reading program to local libraries, to supply the materials when they are needed, and to evaluate the program in an effort to see whether the program helps the stakeholders who

participate. The intent of the summer reading program is to complement and expand local initiatives, including

reading readiness programs developed by the Department of Education. The funds allocated during the coming fiscal year would be well-spent, allowing a summer reading program to be offered statewide beginning in June 1999, and helping to ensure that Michigan's youngsters would become better readers.

POSITIONS:

The Michigan Library Association supports the bill. (9-22-98)

Analyst: J. Hunault

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