

Legislative Analysis



STEROID USE AND INELIGIBILITY

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House Bill 4118 as passed by the House
Sponsor: Rep. Daniel Acciavatti
Committee: Education

Second Analysis (9-15-05)

BRIEF SUMMARY: The bill would require public schools to ensure that their athletic eligibility policies make the use of steroids a violation that would affect a student's eligibility, and require the Department of Community Health to make available a regularly updated list of performance enhancing substances, following the National Collegiate Athletic Association or NCAA. The bill also would encourage nonpublic schools to do the same. (See [Background Information](#).)

FISCAL IMPACT: House Bill 4118 would have minimal fiscal impact to the state. The additional cost to the Department of Community Health would be to obtain and update the information and make it available to all school districts, public school academies, and nonpublic schools.

THE APPARENT PROBLEM:

Anabolic steroids are synthetic male hormones (testosterone) that may be taken in pill form, injected, or applied topically (with creams or patches). There are more than 100 types of anabolic steroids in use. When used by men and women they increase protein production, and consequently increase body weight and muscle mass, having the potential to improve muscular strength and endurance when taken within a strict regimen of diet and intense exercise. However, in males, steroid use is known to cause sterility, impotence, and shrunken genitals. In females, steroid use causes breast reduction, menstrual irregularity, sterility, and development of permanent masculine traits. Further, in teenagers who have not completed their growth, steroids are known to cause premature fusing of bones, resulting in short height. Other long-term effects include jaundice, heart attacks, stroke, tumors, and fatal liver failure or liver cancer. Steroids also cause changes in behavior ranging from aggression, hostility and irritability to psychotic rage. (See [Background Information](#).)

The discovery of steroids occurred in Germany about 70 years ago, when a physician demonstrated that people with grievous injuries, and those stricken by wasting diseases could recover faster with the anabolic or tissue-building effects of steroids. However, the anabolic properties could not be separated from the androgenic or masculinizing effects, so their use was quickly attenuated.

Anabolic steroids were first used to enhance athletic performance in the 1950s by Russian weightlifters competing in the Olympic Games, and their use among athletes in many sports increased steadily in the 1960s and early 1970s. However, because steroids

were capable of building muscle and strength far beyond what naturally occurred, steroid use was eventually equated with cheating, and beginning with the 1976 Olympic Games in Montreal, athletes were tested before their competitions in order to prevent anabolic steroid use—what has come to be called “doping.”

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, steroid use among high school students more than doubled from 1991 to 2003. More than six percent of 15,000 students surveyed by the CDCP in grades 9 through 12 (that is, 900 students) said they took steroid pills or shots at least once. In another survey conducted by the Office of National Drug Control Policy, nearly 43 percent of 12th graders reported that steroids were fairly easy or very easy to obtain. That report also noted that in 2002 the perceived health risk of using steroids among 12th graders was more than 57 percent.

Generally, the increase in use is attributed to four causes: misleading advertising that masks reality; lack of knowledge of the substances’ effects and dangers; confusion about some dietary supplements available without a doctor’s prescription; and, the cultural emphasis on winning at sports—an emphasis that condones youngsters’ preoccupation with body image and fitness in order to improve their competitive advantage, regardless of the health risks.

State law prohibits public school employees or volunteers from selling, promoting, or endorsing the use of performance-enhancing compounds to students, and the Michigan High School Athletic Association discourages their use but does not promulgate rules to prohibit them. Some have suggested that the law should be amended to require every public school district to have a policy that prohibits steroid use, and to link that policy to athletes’ eligibility to participate in sports.

THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:

House Bill 4118 would amend the Revised School Code to require the board of a school district or a public school academy (charter school) to ensure that its athletic eligibility policies make the use of a performance-enhancing substance a violation that will affect a student’s eligibility. In addition, the bill would encourage the governing boards of nonpublic schools to adopt an eligibility policy that met these same requirements.

Under the bill, the Department of Community Health would be required to develop, periodically update, and make available to school districts, charter schools, and nonpublic schools a list of performance-enhancing substances. The department would base the list on the list of banned drugs contained in bylaw 31.2.3.1 of the bylaws of the National Collegiate Athletic Association.

MCL 380.1318

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

For a list of NCAA-banned substances contained in bylaw 31.2.3.1, visit its website at www1.ncaa.org/membership/ed_outreach/health-safety/index.html

Steroids are physiologically and psychologically addictive. Those who use steroids and would like to stop, can call the National Drug and Alcohol Treatment Referral Routing Service at 800-662-HELP.

ARGUMENTS:

For:

Anabolic steroids are harmful to the health of adolescents, and the list of side effects is long and sobering. Nonetheless, according to a study conducted by the Center for Disease Control, slightly more than six percent of the nation's high-school students report that they have taken steroid pills or shots without a doctor's prescription. While that figure is almost twice that of six years ago, the National Institute on Drug Abuse reports that use of steroids has decreased among 8th and 10th grader boys between 2003 and 2004. However, during that same time, use by 12th grade men remained high. In contrast, 7.3 percent of 9th grade girls reported using steroids, while 3.3 percent of 12th grade girls reported having used them.

Because the use of steroids is harmful to youngsters and their use is unacceptably high, school officials must play a role in the prevention of further steroid abuse. This bill would require school athletic officials to declare those who used steroids to be ineligible to participate in sports.

Against:

While this is a good bill, it should take account of the fact that there are a few health conditions that require doctor-prescribed anabolic steroid use. Those who must rely upon prescribed steroids in order to maintain their health should not be penalized for their condition.

POSITIONS:

The Department of Education supports the bill. (4-20-05)

The Michigan High School Athletic Association supports the bill. (4-20-05)

The Richmond Community Schools support the bill. (4-20-05)

Macomb Intermediate School District supports the bill. (4-20-05)

The Michigan Federation of Teachers and School-Related Personnel supports the bill. (4-20-05)

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■ 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.