

Legislative Analysis



MANDATORY KINDERGARTEN; MANDATORY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AT AGE FIVE

Mitchell Bean, Director
Phone: (517) 373-8080
<http://www.house.mi.gov/hfa>

House Bill 4662

Sponsor: Rep. Virgil Smith

Committee: Education

Complete to 2-18-08

A SUMMARY OF HOUSE BILL 4662 AS INTRODUCED 4-25-07

House Bill 4662 would amend the Revised School Code to (1) require school districts to provide kindergarten and (2) require parents to send five-year-olds to school.

Currently under the law, five year olds have the right to attend school, but are not required to do so. The law specifies instead that every parent, guardian, or other person having control and charge of a child from the age of six to the child's 16th birthday must send that child to a public school during the entire school year. (The law has exceptions for private schooling and home schooling, among other things.) House Bill 4662 would make the mandatory school attendance requirement apply at the age of five.

Specifically, current law requires that a child who becomes six years of age before December 1 must enroll on the first school day of the school year in which the child's sixth birthday occurs. A child who becomes six on or after December 1 must be enrolled by the following the year. House Bill 4662 would make this provision apply to a child who became five before December 1. (Currently, children who become five before December 1 are entitled to enroll in kindergarten but need not. Moreover, under the code, five-year-olds have a right to attend school even when kindergarten is not offered.)

The Revised School Code does not currently require a school district to maintain a kindergarten (although all school districts do so). The bill would require districts to provide kindergarten.

MCL 380.1147 and 380.1561

FISCAL IMPACT:

The bill could increase both local and State education costs. Every local school district currently provides kindergarten, so the provision requiring that they do so would have no fiscal impact; however, lowering the age of mandatory school attendance from six to five could increase costs depending on how many five-year-olds already attend school.

While information on the exact number of five-year-olds currently enrolled in school is pending, available data seems to indicate that most five-year-olds attend school. In FY 2006-07, there were approximately 127,900 students enrolled in public school

kindergarten programs, and almost 10,400 students voluntarily reported in private school kindergarten programs, for a total of 138,300. The total may be slightly higher due to home schooled children and those in non-reporting private schools. There were only 133,250 children born in Michigan in 2001 who would have been five for the FY 2006-07 school year, so there were more students enrolled in kindergarten than were born five years before. While this can be explained because kindergartners may include some four-year-olds and some six-year olds, it also suggests that many if not most five-year-olds are attending school. The average foundation allowance for FY 2007-08 is \$7,721; however, both the total cost and the state/local share of the cost of each additional kindergarten student would depend on the school district.

Legislative Analyst: J. Hunault
Fiscal Analyst: Mary Ann Cleary
Bethany Wicksall

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