

Legislative Analysis



MANDATORY SCHOOL ATTENDENCE AT AGE FIVE; MANDATORY FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN BY 2011

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House Bill 4662 (Substitute H-2)

Sponsor: Rep. Virgil Smith

Committee: Education

Complete to 3-10-08

A SUMMARY OF HOUSE BILL 4662 (SUBSTITUTE H-2)

House Bill 4662 would amend the Revised School Code to (1) require school districts to provide kindergarten; (2) require parents to send five-year-olds to school; and (3) require that beginning with the 2011-2012 school year, the length of the school day for kindergarteners be the same as for other elementary school grades; that is, require full-day kindergarten. The bill would take effect January 1, 2009.

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 (H-2) would retain the right to attend school, and the exceptions. The bill specifies that a person has a right to attend school if the person is: a) at least five years of age on December 1 and less than 20 years of age on September 1 of the school year; or b) a special education pupil who is enrolled and receiving instruction in a special education program or service approved by the Department of Education, and is less than 26 years of age on September 1 of the school year.

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 year. House Bill 4662 would make this provision apply to a child who became five on or 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. Further, beginning with the 2011-2012 school year, the length of the school day for a school district's kindergarten program would have to be the same as for other elementary school grades operated by the school district (that is, kindergarten would be full-day).

MCL 380.1147 and 380.1561

FISCAL IMPACT:

Summary

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. Estimates suggest that the change could cost as much as \$72 million. A detailed explanation of how these estimates were derived follows below.

In addition the bill would require that by 2011-2012, districts provide full-day kindergarten. The state currently pays districts a full foundation allowance for each kindergarten pupil whether they are in a half- or full-day program, so state costs would not increase. However, this could create significant cost increases for local districts due to increased staffing and facility needs. See below for estimates of the number of districts currently providing full-day kindergarten as well as estimates of pupils attending full-day programs.

Mandatory Age of Attendance

There were 129,518 children born in Michigan in 2002 who would be five years old for the current school year. Estimated population data from the U.S. Census Bureau suggests that Michigan has a negative net migration, which is likely to have resulted in the loss of approximately 1,250 five-year-olds between 2002 and now. Subtracting this from the children born in 2002 would leave us with a total of approximately 128,250 five-year-olds currently in Michigan.

According to the Center for Educational Performance and Information (CEPI), there were 108,763 children enrolled in FY 2007-08 who turned five between December 2, 2006 and December 1, 2007. This represents about 85 percent of the 128,250 five-year-olds currently in Michigan. This also means that five-year-olds represent nearly 88 percent of the 123,845 students reported in kindergarten in Fall 2007.

According to information voluntarily reported to the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) by private schools, nearly 10,400 children were in private kindergartens in FY 2006-07. Discounting this based on the drop in birthrates from 2001 to 2002 and the estimated impact of migration from 2002 to 2007, we estimate that approximately 10,000 children were enrolled in private kindergartens in FY 2007-08. As stated above, 88 percent of those enrolled in public school kindergarten are five years old. If the same proportion of students who attend private kindergarten are five years old, then there would be about 8,800 five-year-olds currently in private kindergartens. This would represent about 7 percent of the 128,250 five-year-olds currently in Michigan.

Adding the 85 percent of five-year-olds in public schools to the 7 percent in private schools provides an estimated total of 92 percent of five-year-olds currently attending school. If the mandatory age of enrollment is lowered for FY 2009-10, the additional 8 percent of five-year-olds who would have to attend school would equal approximately

10,275. If the same proportions attend public and private schools as those already enrolled, approximately 9,500 would attend public school. At an average FY 2007-08 foundation allowance of \$7,573, this would require an additional \$72 million. Any increases in the foundation allowance between now and FY 2009-10 would increase the expense.

There is insufficient data with which to estimate how many five-year-olds are home-schooled; however, any additional costs would be reduced to the extent that a portion of the 8 percent unaccounted for in either public or private schools attend home schools.

Full-Day Kindergarten

According to information collected by the MDE on the number of days and hours of instruction provided in kindergarten programs, it appears that of the 662 districts for which there was data, approximately a third of all districts providing kindergarten provide half-day programs, while another third provide full-day programs, and a final third provide either both or some alternative of the two. For the purposes of this discussion, full-day kindergarten means an equal number of hours of instruction as in grades 1-12.

However, looking at the number of students in each type of program provides significantly different results. Only 16 percent of students were in programs where the district only provides full-day kindergarten; 38 percent of students were in programs where the district only offers a half-day program; and the remaining 46 percent were in districts that either provided both or alternative types of programs. For districts that provide both half- and full-day programs, there is no available data to show how many students are in which type of program. Alternative programs may include, for example, either half of the total instructional hours provided in three longer days or five days with somewhere between 50 percent and 100 percent of the total instructional hours provided to other grades.

This suggests that a significant portion of children attending kindergarten are not in full-day programs and that local districts could face significant cost increases if required to provide full-day programs.

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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.