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Senate Bill 530 (as passed by the Senate)
Sponsor: Senator Dale W. Zorn
Committee: Families, Seniors, and Veterans (discharged)
Local Government

Date Completed: 11-10-22

RATIONALE

According to the United Service Organizations, a nonprofit organization supporting members of the military and their families, most military families relocate every two to three years. The frequency of relocation can create difficulties for the children of these families, known as military-connected children. Military-connected children change schools six to nine times between kindergarten and the end of high school, which can cause certain difficulties, such as learning gaps. Some people believe that schools could reduce the difficulties that military-connected children face by establishing programs that assist these children in the transition from one school to another. One such program is the Purple Star Program. Accordingly, it has been suggested that the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) create a Purple Star Program (see **BACKGROUND**) and allow for school districts to apply for a Purple-Star-Program designation.

CONTENT

The bill would amend the Revised School Code to require the Department of Education to create a Purple Star Program by January 1, 2023, and to prescribe requirements that a public school would have to meet to qualify for Purple-Star-Program-School designation.

By January 1, 2023, the Department would have to create a Purple Star Program that, at a minimum, would have to include an application process for a public school to apply to receive Purple-Star-Program-School designation and a process for the designation of public schools that met the criteria provided by the bill as Purple-Star-Program schools.

The bill specifies that a public school that met at least all of the requirements described below would qualify for Purple-Star-Program-school designation.

The public school would have to designate a staff member of the public school as a military liaison and the military liaison would be charged with, at a minimum, all the following:

- Identifying military-connected pupils enrolled in the public school.
- Serving as the point of contact between other individuals at the public school and military connected pupils and their families.
- Determining appropriate services available to military-connected pupils.
- Assisting in coordinating programs relevant to military-connected pupils.
- Ensuring that military-connected pupils had access to appropriate counseling, mentoring, volunteering opportunities, and support services.

("Military-connected pupil" would mean a pupil enrolled in a school district, intermediate school district, or public school academy who was either the family member of a current or former member of the armed forces or was the family member of an individual who was a member of the Armed

Forces and who was killed in the line of duty. "Armed Forces" would mean the United States Army, Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps, Space Force, or Coast Guard or other military force designated by Congress as part of the Armed Forces of the United States, including the reserve components. The reserve components would include the National Guard.)

The public school would have to maintain on its website homepage an easily accessible web page that included resources for military-connected pupils and their families that included at least the following:

- Information concerning relocation to, enrollment at, registration at, and the transferring of records to the school.
- Information regarding academic planning, course sequences, and advanced classes available at the school.
- Information regarding counseling and other support services available for military connected pupils enrolled at the school.
- Information concerning the military liaison designated as described above and the liaison's duties.

The public school would have to maintain a transition program led by pupils, where appropriate, that assisted military-connected pupils in transitioning to the public school. The public school also would have to offer professional development for staff members of the public school on issues related to military connected pupils, which could be provided by a professional educator association in the State.

In addition, the public school would have to offer at least one of the following initiatives:

- A resolution showing support for military-connected pupils and their families.
- A recognition of a military-connected pupil or the family of a military-connected pupil each month with relevant events connected to this recognition hosted by the public school.
- A partnership with a branch of the Armed Forces that provided opportunities for members of the Armed Forces to volunteer at the school, speak at an assembly, or host a field trip sponsored by the school.
- Pupil-driven clubs and groups that showed community-family engagement for military-connected pupils and their families.

MCL 380.1138a

BACKGROUND

According to the Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC), the Purple Star Program originally started as an initiative in Ohio in 2017. The MCEC reports that there is no national governing body of Purple Star programs and that many of the states that have developed Purple Star programs administer their programs at their own discretion. However, the MCEC specifies that state administrators of Purple Star programs generally require schools to include certain components for the program's implementation: a designated point-of-contact, professional development, a dedicated webpage, transition programs, and military recognition events.

ARGUMENTS

(Please note: The arguments contained in this analysis originate from sources outside the Senate Fiscal Agency. The Senate Fiscal Agency neither supports nor opposes legislation.)

Supporting Argument

Military-connected children face significant challenges because of their families' frequent relocations. State educational curricula and standards may differ, which could lead to learning and skills gaps for military-connected children, and differing enrollment practices could result in misaligned course schedules that force military-connected children to repeat certain classes or

miss some altogether. In addition, relocations often result in military-connected children losing support systems and having difficulty coping with new social environments. These challenges can inhibit a military-connected child's success.

Purple Star programs can address some of these challenges. For example, according to the MCEC's study on the efficacy of Purple Star programs, 77% of parents with military-connected children in schools with Purple Star programs were satisfied with their children's social and emotional experiences. Only 54% of parents with military-connected children in schools without Purple Star programs reported the same satisfaction.¹ Purple Star programs play a role in reducing the difficulty of military-connected children's frequent transitions, and the MDE should be required to create and administer a Purple Star program designation process for schools in the State. The designation would equip schools with beneficial policies and approaches for military-connected children and would allow military families to find these schools with greater ease.

Legislative Analyst: Tyler P. VanHuyse

FISCAL IMPACT

The bill would have a negative fiscal impact on the State and no mandatory fiscal impact on intermediate school districts, school districts, and public school academies. The Department of Education would experience additional costs to create a program to designate Purple Star Program Schools, which would include creating an application process and designating schools. The Department anticipates that it would require a 0.5 FTE position and under \$100,000 to create and operate the program.

Intermediate school districts, school districts, and public school academies would not experience a mandatory fiscal impact. Schools that applied for designation would experience additional costs to support military-connected pupils under the program. These costs would vary depending on the school's current resources and would apply only to those schools that sought designation as a Purple Star Program School.

Fiscal Analyst: Cory Savino, PhD

¹ Military Child Education Coalition, *A study of the Purple Star School Designation Program*, pg. 32, 2021.

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This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan Senate staff for use by the Senate in its deliberations and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.