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Senate Bill 52 (Substitute S-1 as passed by the Senate)

Sponsor: Senator Vern Ehlers

Committee: Education and Mental Health

Date Completed: 6-26-89

RATIONALE

Michigan has had a long tradition of providing quality educational services that have prepared its citizens to meet the State's changing needs. In the past, as the State's economy shifted from an agricultural to an industrial base, the State's educational system responded by providing courses that equipped students with the skills they needed in order to enter the industrialized work world. Since today's high school students will live in an increasingly technological and global society, even greater demands are being placed on the State's educational system to produce high school graduates who will be prepared to function in this rapidly changing society and economy. Thus, an understanding of highly technological subjects, such as computer science, and a sound background in the sciences and mathematics coupled with a familiarity with a foreign language are considered by many to be an integral part of a high school education for today and in the future. In order to provide the most up-to-date instruction in these subject areas, it has been suggested that school districts should be able to go outside of the traditional educational community to bring highly skilled professionals into the classroom. Some people believe that qualified technologists, who do not have a background in education but do have the desire to impart their knowledge to today's students, should be permitted to teach certain subjects in the State's schools.

- Permit a local or intermediate school board to engage a full- or part-time noncertificated, nonendorsed teacher to teach certain subjects in grades 9 through 12.
- Limit the hours of pupil instruction provided by these teachers.
- Establish minimum requirements for these teachers.
- Prohibit a school district from engaging a full- or part-time noncertificated, nonendorsed teacher to teach a course if a certificated, endorsed teacher were available.
- Require, in certain circumstances, that the teaching experience of a noncertificated, nonendorsed teacher be used to waive the student teaching requirement as a condition for receiving continued employment authorization in a school district and a provisional teaching certificate.
- Require the State Board of Education to promulgate rules to implement the bill.

Noncertificated/Nonendorsed Teachers

The bill would create an exception to the provision of the School Code that prohibits the board of a school district from permitting a teacher who does not hold a valid teaching

CONTENT

The bill would amend the School Code to:

S.B. 52 (6-26-89)

certificate to teach in a grade or department of the school, or permitting a teacher without an endorsement by the State Board of Education to serve in a counseling role.

Under the bill, the board of a local or intermediate school district could engage a full- or part-time noncertificated, nonendorsed teacher to teach in grades 9 through 12 a course in computer science, a foreign language, mathematics, biology, chemistry, engineering, physics, robotics, or any combination of these subjects. The total number of hours of pupil instruction taught by teachers engaged by a board pursuant to the bill could not exceed 10% of the total number of hours of pupil instruction taught by all of the teachers in the school district.

The board of a local or intermediate school district could not engage a full-time noncertificated, nonendorsed teacher to teach a course, as identified in the bill, if the district were able to engage a certificated, endorsed teacher who possessed the expertise needed to teach that course.

Minimum Requirements

A noncertificated, nonendorsed teacher would be qualified to teach pursuant to the bill if he or she met all of the following minimum requirements:

- Possessed an earned bachelor's degree from an accredited postsecondary institution.
- Had a major or a graduate degree in the field or specialization in which he or she was to teach.
- Had passed both a basic skills examination and a subject area examination, if a subject area examination existed in the field of specialization in which he or she was to teach. This provision would take effect September 1, 1991, and would apply only if the teacher desired to teach for more than one year.
- Had at least two years of occupational experience in the field of specialization in which he or she was to teach, unless the person was engaged to teach a foreign language.

The bill specifies that these requirements would be in addition to any other requirements established by the board of a local or intermediate school district, as applicable.

Continued Employment

If the board of a local or intermediate school district were able to engage a certificated, endorsed teacher to teach a course, as specified in the bill, the local or intermediate school board could continue to employ a noncertificated, nonendorsed teacher to teach the course if both of the following conditions were met:

- The noncertificated, nonendorsed teacher was annually and continually enrolled and completing credit in an approved teacher preparation program leading to a provisional teaching certificate.
- The noncertificated, nonendorsed teacher had a planned program leading to teacher certification on file with the employing school district or intermediate school district, his or her teacher preparation institution, and the Department of Education.

If the board of a local or intermediate school district were not able to engage a certificated, endorsed teacher to teach a course specified in the bill, the Department of Education and a teacher preparation institution would be required to use the teaching experience of a noncertificated, nonendorsed teacher for the purpose of waiving student teaching as a condition for receiving a continued employment authorization in the school district and a provisional teaching certificate.

MCL 380.1233 et al.

FISCAL IMPACT

The bill would have no fiscal impact on State or local government.

ARGUMENTS

Supporting Argument

In an emerging era of high technology when developments are occurring rapidly, it would be advantageous to employ in high technology curricula, technicians from outside the

education field who have been able, through their actual work experience and training, to keep abreast of innovation and developments in a way that classroom teachers frequently cannot.

Response: Under the bill, a person would be able to teach without being certified or endorsed by the State if he or she met certain minimum requirements, including possessing a bachelor's degree from an accredited post-secondary institution, and having a major or graduate degree in the field of specialization in which he or she were to teach, and having at least two years of occupational experience in the field of specialization. Thus, a person who possessed a bachelor's degree and worked for two years in his or her specialization would be eligible to teach in Michigan's high schools without having to meet any other requirements. It is not clear how these persons could be considered more qualified to teach certain subjects than professional educators who have to meet State certification requirements. In order to be certified, a prospective high school teacher, for example, currently must hold a bachelor's degree from a State-approved program, which includes at least: 30 semester hours in a major field of study, 20 semester hours in a minor, six semester hours of supervised teacher training, and 40 semester hours in a liberal arts education (which may include the major and minor credit hours), as well as completion of a professional education sequence of at least 20 semester hours. Furthermore, many of today's teachers possess advanced degrees and have participated in professional development opportunities in order to enrich their professional backgrounds.

Supporting Argument

One research study has pointed out that only about 5% of the American public is literate in science. America's high school youth doesn't fare much better. In fact, today's high school students learn far less science than do their counterparts in Japan and the Soviet Union. Reportedly, for example, only about one-sixth of the high school students in this country take physics, while Soviet students must take a compulsory five-year sequence. This lack of an understanding of science and mathematics in today's society and in the near future has been characterized as a national tragedy that could diminish this country's overall position in global affairs. Senate Bill 52 (S-1) would help by

attracting persons with solid backgrounds in mathematics and science into the classrooms.

Opposing Argument

The bill is not necessary since administrative rules already allow school districts to employ persons without teaching certificates to provide instruction in the schools when a regularly certificated teacher is not available. According to Department of Education officials, there are three types of permits available to a person who is not certificated: full-year, substitute, and "emergency". To obtain a full-year teacher permit, a person must possess a bachelor's degree that includes having earned at least 120 semester hours of credit in an approved teacher education program of which at least 15 semester hours were in teacher preparation courses. The rules also permit school districts to obtain substitute permits for persons who do not have a teaching certificate but who have completed 120 semester credit hours in an approved teacher education program and earned six semester hours in a teacher preparation program. Finally, a person who has no professional education background but has earned less than 120 semester hours may be eligible for a substitute permit on an emergency basis. Thus, if a school district wished to employ a person with training in any of the curriculum areas specified in the bill but the person did not actually have a teaching certificate, it could do so under the School Code, provided a teacher with a certificate and trained in that subject area was not available. Furthermore, teachers are not restricted from bringing into the classroom persons, who have expertise in certain areas, as "visiting teachers" as long as the class remains under the supervision of a certificated teacher.

Opposing Argument

In order to give a haircut, manicure nails, or landscape a lawn in Michigan, the person purporting to provide that service must be licensed or board-certified by the State. Teaching is just as important--if not more so--as being a barber, cosmetologist, or landscape architect. Anyone with direct responsibility for the education of students must meet initial certification requirements, including a demonstrated ability to meet established standards for pedagogical skills, mastery of subject area, and knowledge of developmental learning stages of children and youth. A

teaching certificate does guarantee that the teacher has a certain amount of knowledge about the subject or subjects being taught, while also guaranteeing that the teacher has been exposed to the science of teaching and can recognize that all children do not learn the same way. It is not enough to argue that because a person a person can read a person can teach reading. Teaching is a profession and like other professions, such as medicine, law, and accounting, must require that its practitioners meet certain minimum standards.

Opposing Argument

Public Act 267 of 1986 requires that, beginning in 1991, prospective teachers pass both a basic skills examination and appropriate subject area examinations prior to certification. Senate Bill 52 (S-1) would require certain noncertificated, nonendorsed teachers to take and pass the tests, but only if they wanted to teach for more than one year. Thus, noncertificated teachers could teach for one year without passing any basic skills or subject area examinations, while their certificated, endorsed counterparts will have to pass such exams before they can step into the classroom for the first time. Thus, when the testing provisions of Public Act 267 take effect in 1991, the dichotomy in requirements for professionally trained teachers versus requirements for persons who could enter teaching because of Senate Bill 52 (S-1) would be even greater.

Opposing Argument

Some school districts reportedly have had difficulty in recruiting "knowledgeable" persons to teach certain high school courses. The inability of school districts to find highly qualified teaching staff raises the serious question about the adequacy of teacher training programs. As a result of calls for education reform, teacher education programs have come under scrutiny and criticism. Proposals to improve teacher quality include strengthening teacher training, education, and continuing education. Some studies have proposed abolishing the four-year education major and requiring teachers to obtain an undergraduate major in an academic subject and a fifth-year graduate degree in teaching, while other proposals have called for retaining the four-year program but requiring more rigorous courses and content. Some states reportedly have reviewed their teacher preparation programs,

created new centers for teacher preparation, raised their test scores for admission to teacher colleges, increased the amount of practice teaching under the supervision of experienced teachers, raised requirements in major and minor areas of concentration, and switched from education to academic majors for teacher preparation. Rather than sidestep the issue of the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs offered in Michigan, which would be the effect of Senate Bill 52 (S-1), the State should be investigating ways to improve and strengthen the training, recruitment, and retention of highly qualified educators.

Opposing Argument

As society becomes more global, the ability to speak only English is becoming a handicap. The bill would acknowledge this new reality by permitting a school district to employ a person who majored in a foreign language in college to teach that language without being a certificated teacher. Yet, is this the most effective means of promoting foreign language education? Two states--Minnesota and Virginia--are experimenting with innovative foreign language programs that will help students not learn a foreign language but gain an understanding of other cultures. Minnesota's foreign exchange program, "Minnesota in the World and the World in Minnesota", involves the exchange of Minnesota students and faculty with faculty and students from other countries, such as the Soviet Union, Australia, Japan, and China. Since 1986, more than 200 Minnesota public school teachers have spent two to three weeks abroad learning about foreign languages and cultures. Upon their return, these teachers develop instructional materials for statewide distribution. These exchanges reportedly have improved international education in that state, and it is projected that by the year 2000 each Minnesota high school graduate will have received an education on foreign cultures through social studies, music, the arts, and languages. In Virginia, high school students are offered intensive foreign language study through its Foreign Language Academies. Students, teachers, and administrators immerse themselves in a foreign language during the month-long academy, with formal classes in the morning and recreational activities in the afternoon. Many of the students who have completed the academy reportedly have returned to their high schools to become

teachers' aides or language tutors. In both programs, the states have provided financial as well as administrative support. In fact, the Minnesota Legislature reportedly was considering expanding the program to fund regional international education centers throughout the state and to increase the number of certified foreign language elementary and secondary teachers. While the acknowledgement by the bill's proponents of the importance of foreign language education is laudable, merely providing the opportunity for persons who majored in foreign language to teach in the State's high schools may not be the most effective means of promoting and enhancing foreign language and international education programs in the State.

Opposing Argument

Enactment of the bill would send contradictory messages as to the importance of strict certification standards for teachers. For over 65 years, Public Act 302 of 1921 has provided for the supervision of private, denominational, and parochial schools, including provision for the certification of teachers in these schools. Recently, however, certain nonpublic schools have argued that the State has no authority over their schools and have refused to supply to the Department of Education information on enrollment, courses of study, and teacher qualifications. Representative of these schools, in trying to work out a compromise with the State, also have sought a modification of the State's teacher certification requirements. In May, the Department threatened to close 40 of these private schools unless the schools reported information required by the Department, including information on teacher certification. Subsequently, representatives of those private schools filed a suit against the Department charging that its demand for information, including the reporting of teacher qualifications, was part of a "scheme" to regulate their educational ministries. Throughout the debate over regulation, the State has argued that it has a legitimate interest in ensuring that students receive a quality education, and that to accomplish this the State requires that public and private school teachers meet certain certification standards. If Senate Bill 52 (S-1) were enacted, public and nonpublic schools, which already comply with State teacher certification standards, would be able to employ noncertificated and nonendorsed teachers for

certain high school courses. In effect, the State would be taking the first step toward relaxation of its certification standards under Senate Bill 52 (S-1)--a step that the State has been reluctant to take in dealing with certain private schools.

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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.