

## **CAREER PREPARATION ACT**

### **House Bill 4066 (Substitute H-2) First Analysis (4-8-97)**

**Sponsor: Rep. Glenn Oxender  
Committee: Education**

#### ***THE APPARENT PROBLEM:***

There has been increasing focus over the past decade on the need for public education to better prepare students for today's world of work and for the workplaces of the future. There have been various school-to-work or school-to-career and career preparation initiatives at federal and state levels, including two recent federal acts, the Tech Prep Education Act of 1990 and the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994. The first of these has, according to published accounts, provided grants to local consortia for conducting planning, providing teacher in-service training, creating partnerships with business, and designing career-based skill sequences. The second act, according to the National School-to-Work Learning and Information Center, has been sending federal dollars to the states for use as seed money in developing systems "to prepare youth for the high wage, high skill careers of today's and tomorrow's global economy." The systems are supposed to be built upon existing successful efforts in each state. The federal funding reportedly sunsets in 2001, when the states are to pick up financial support for such efforts. There have also been a number of efforts initiated at the state level over the past decade, including a revision of vocational education programs (now known as career and technical education), the development of employability skills and assessment mechanisms as part of a model core curriculum made available to all school districts, and the efforts of workforce development boards under the jurisdiction of the Michigan Jobs Commission, to name a few. Moreover, in the past few legislative sessions, legislation has been introduced with the aim of creating a statewide planning process to strengthen the link between schools and the world of work and ensuring that children and adults can obtain the knowledge and skills they need to participate successfully in the ever-changing "global" economy. The proposals have envisioned the collaboration of representatives of business, labor, and education in creating a system to identify the skills and knowledge needed in the workplace so that all students would have access to education that would allow them to make a successful transition from school to work or from school to advanced education to work. (See [Background Information](#).)

The governor's budget proposal for the 1997-98 fiscal year contains a recommended \$9.5 million in grants within the school aid budget for a new program called the Career Preparation System. Of this, \$2 million is for planning grants beginning in October 1997, and \$7.5 million is for the initial implementation of the regional career preparation plans in July 1998, when the 1998-99 school year begins. An additional \$30 million is expected to be recommended for the 1998-99 fiscal year for implementation of the plans. Also, an appropriation of \$140,000 is recommended in the 1997-98 budget of the Jobs Commission, to fund the operations of a proposed Council on Career Preparation Standards that will be formed within the commission. The council's charge is to assemble and disseminate information on current and future employment needs, to set competency standards for occupations, and to coordinate information on job opportunities. According to information made available by the Office of Career and Technical Education (within the Department of Education), the new career preparation system intends to establish career preparation as an integral part of the state's education system and to provide additional choices for parents and students. The system, says the OCTE, "emphasizes the importance of rigorous academic and technical education for student success in careers of their choice and encourages the active involvement of business and industry in the design and implementation of the system, including the targeting of high skill, high wage careers." It also, says the office, contains accountability standards upon which future funding of regional plans will be based.

Legislation has been introduced that will place some key elements of this proposed career preparation system in statute.

#### ***THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:***

The bill would create the Career Preparation Act within the Revised School Code (MCL 380.1651). Among the elements of the proposed act are the following.

-- A 21-member Council For Career Preparation Standards would be created within the Michigan

Department of Jobs Commission to develop, implement and oversee a statewide system for gathering, disseminating, and providing accurate information on employment and skill-level needs in the workplace; to collaborate in related activities with the State Board of Education and the Department of Education; and to establish uniform career competency standards for each major career area identified, based on current and anticipated employment needs. The council would also be required to evaluate the effectiveness of federally registered apprenticeship programs and to make recommendations regarding them to the legislature and governor and would be required to establish broad state guidelines for all work-based learning programs. The council and the Governor's Workforce Commission would be required to coordinate their activities and responsibilities to the greatest extent possible. No later than three years after the new act took effect, the council would have to conduct a comprehensive review of the legislation and other career preparation laws and report to the governor and legislature any recommendations for change.

-- The statewide system referred to above would have to include at least local workforce development boards established under the federal Job Training Partnership Act and the federal School-To-Work Opportunities Act, or the equivalent, and an education advisory group for each local workforce development board. Each workforce board would be responsible for assessing and providing information on local and regional employment needs in the area it served and for establishing and utilizing an advisory group for career preparation planning.

-- In addition to other members, each workforce board would have to include one local school board member, one local school district superintendent, one community college president or dean, one intermediate school district career education administrator, one local school district career/technical education administrator, one teacher, and at least two other educators. The council would be required to coordinate and work with the local workforce boards.

-- The advisory group established by a workforce development board would have to equitably represent local school districts, intermediate school districts, post-secondary institutions, career/technical educators, and academic educators. One member of the workforce board would also serve on the advisory group. The representatives of the local and intermediate school districts and post-secondary institutions would be designated by the school district, intermediate district, and post-secondary institution.

-- An advisory group would develop a three-year regional career preparation plan and submit it to the

workforce development board for approval. If the plan was disapproved and the issues between the advisory group and the workforce board could not be resolved, the advisory group could appeal to the Department of Education. Before implementing a career preparation plan, the workforce development board would have to receive the approval of the department.

-- The state board of education would be required to carry out a number of duties using the council's information, including evaluating existing curricula and programs and existing assessment mechanisms; developing new student employment-related knowledge and skill assessment mechanisms; assisting school boards and community college boards in improving educational programs to meet future employment needs; helping in providing advanced placement for students based on credits earned and skills mastered in completing technical preparation or an applied academic area of study; establishing ways higher education can collaborate with school districts to make equipment, laboratories, and supplies available; and recommending ways to make available to all students information and counseling about employment opportunities.

-- Public Act 97 of 1974, the Career Education Act, would be repealed.

The following is a more detailed description of some elements of the bill.

Council Membership. The Council for Career Preparation would have 21 members: 3 state officials and 18 members appointed by the governor and legislative leadership. The state officials would be the superintendent of public instruction or a designee, the director of the Department of Consumer and Industry Services or a designee, and the director of the Michigan Jobs Commission or a designee.

The governor would appoint nine business members, including one representative from businesses of 150 or fewer employees. One member would represent each of the following major standard industrial and business classifications: agriculture, forestry, and mining; construction; manufacturing; wholesale and retail trade; finance, insurance, and real estate; services, including health services; public administration and services; and transportation, communication, and utilities. One additional member would be appointed by the governor to represent other major industry or business sectors.

The governor, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the Senate Majority Leader would each appoint three members (for a total of nine), two representing education, and one representing organized labor. The three would confer to ensure that, of the education representatives, at least one represented local

public education, one represented post-secondary institutions, and one represented career/technical education.

The appointed members would serve three-year terms, to be staggered as prescribed in the council's bylaws. A member of the council would be prohibited from using his or her position as a council member to promote a partisan political cause. The jobs commission, in collaboration with the state board of education, would have to provide sufficient staff for the council to carry out its responsibilities.

Duties of the Council/Statewide System. Within nine months (270 days) after the bill took effect, the council would have to develop and implement a statewide system for gathering and disseminating accurate information on current and anticipated employment needs and for determining the type and level of skills and education required for employment. To the extent possible, the system would incorporate existing resources of and information already gathered by the Governor's Workforce Commission and other existing agencies, organizations, councils, and committees established by law and having a primary function directly related to education, employment, or job training.

In addition to duties already mentioned, the council would be required to review information on current and anticipated employment needs throughout the state in each major career area, including the education and skills that will be required, and to develop a uniform standard of competency for each major occupational area. The council's other duties would include:

- Identifying ways in which existing revenue is being used at the secondary education level to train and educate individuals for the workplace, and making recommendations to the governor and legislature on efficient and effective uses of those funds, and on whether and for what purpose additional funding is needed;
- Identifying ways in which business can invest in the educational system by assisting in ongoing teacher training, providing equipment, and furnishing information on workplace changes;
- Identifying the educational expectations of community colleges and other institutions of higher education and making recommendations to the governor, legislature, and state board of education about their roles in helping provide students with a "seamless transition" from high school to college or work;
- Providing analysis of the statewide system and the local workforce development boards, including

coordinating, monitoring, and modifying the statewide system as necessary to meet changing needs; and

- Providing information to parents, students, school personnel, employers, and others about opportunities available for students to engage in integrated academic and career/technical preparation in the public schools.

Apprenticeship/Work-Based Learning Programs. The council would be required to evaluate the effectiveness of federally registered apprenticeship programs in the state and make recommendations to the governor and legislature regarding the effective and efficient use of existing revenue and on whether additional funds are needed and for what purposes. At a minimum, the council would be required to evaluate federally registered apprenticeship programs serving high school students and any tax credit program for apprenticeship programs.

The council would also be required to review and establish broad state guidelines for all work-based learning programs, including but not limited to pre-apprenticeship programs. At a minimum, the guidelines would have to include general criteria for curriculum content; assurance that the program will include structured on-the-job training combined with classroom instruction; the transfer of skills on the job through a mentor or skilled supervisor; the opportunity for the trainee to acquire skills while earning a wage; a contract or agreement between the training sponsor and the trainee on the process and outcomes of training; formal recognition, such as accreditation, identified programs, and the awarding of worker credentials upon completion; performance-based evaluation methods by which to measure the performance of each student; and identification of best practices for these programs.

Duties of the State Board of Education. The state board of education, using information provided by the council, would be required to:

- Evaluate whether existing assessment mechanisms used in the educational system, including, but not limited to, the statewide proficiency test and the Michigan educational assessment program (MEAP) reflect the basic competencies, skills and skill levels, and knowledge that will be needed in the workplace;
- Develop peer review mechanisms involving business, industry, and labor for use in assessing whether students have attained the expected competencies, skills, and skill levels, including employability and problem solving skills;
- Assist local and intermediate school boards and community college boards to alter, expand, and improve existing educational programs to meet future

employment needs, including the development of regional career preparation plans for providing programs and services;

-- Encourage community colleges, proprietary schools, and colleges and universities to provide advanced placement for students successfully completing career/technical preparation or an applied academic area of study, by taking into account the credits earned and skills mastered from that study;

-- Encourage community colleges, colleges, and universities to collaborate with local and intermediate school districts to make equipment, laboratories, and supplies available to the districts if it is more cost effective than acquisition by the districts; and

-- Make recommendations on the best ways to ensure that ongoing comprehensive and accurate information and counseling about employment opportunities is available to all students.

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

Proposals with some similarities to this bill have been before the legislature in the previous three sessions. House Bill 4196, sponsored by Rep. Oxender, passed the House in the 1995-96 session and would have created the School to Work Transition Act. House Bill 4505, sponsored by Rep. Keith, passed the House in the 1993-94 session and would have created the Keith-Oxender Occupation Education Act. House Bill 4165, sponsored by Rep. Keith, passed the House in the 1991-92 session and would have implemented recommendations of the Speaker's Blue Ribbon Commission on Career/Technical Education, which had been issued in August of 1992.

### **FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:**

According to the House Fiscal Agency, the increased state general fund cost is estimated at \$140,000, and that amount is included in the fiscal year 1997-98 executive budget proposal for the Michigan Jobs Commission. The state board of education might also need additional resources in the future as a result of this bill, according to the HFA. (Fiscal Note dated 3-4-97)

### **ARGUMENTS:**

#### **For:**

The bill would put into statute a statewide planning system in conjunction with a proposal from the Engler Administration that aims to make career preparation an integral part of the state's education system. Proponents have said the system will emphasize the importance of rigorous academic and technical education for student

success in the careers of their own choosing and will encourage the active participation of business and industry in designing and implementing the system, including the targeting of high skill and high wage jobs. The current executive budget proposal contains funding for this system, including funding for regional planning grants. Among the key elements in this bill are a council of business, labor, government, and education representatives to develop career competency standards, establish an information system on employment needs, and provide information to the public on career preparation opportunities; and regional career preparation plans, developed by local advisory groups that would be attached to existing workforce development boards. (As reported from committee, the workforce boards would be required to have a specified number of representatives of education.) The system has roles for the state board of education, the Jobs Commission, intermediate and local school districts, regional job training boards, and representatives of key segments of business and industry. The stated aims of the career preparation system as a whole include expanding student and parental education choices; establishing career preparation as an integral part of the state's educational system; elevating the career preparation system to the status of the college preparation system; increasing the involvement of business and industry for planning and implementation; establishing accountability standards, including peer review committees, to ensure quality; and providing additional funding as an incentive for high performance and statewide implementation.

#### **Response:**

A number of concerns have been raised about this bill and similar legislation in past years. Some people question the placing of the Council for Career Preparation Standards within the Jobs Commission. Similarly, the role given the workforce development boards is questioned; reportedly, relations between schools and the boards are not smooth. There are concerns about how traditional labor-sponsored apprenticeships fit into the picture. Some people would like to see parents specifically represented on the proposed council (and on the advisory groups that are to carry out regional planning), in addition to the business, labor, and education representatives. On the other hand, there are objections from some proponents of a career preparation system about the bill's expansion of existing workforce development boards to include a designated number of educators. In fact, there are a number of issues regarding membership on planning bodies and their duties that remain to be ironed out among parties who generally agree on the concept behind this bill and the governor's proposal.

#### **Against:**

Some people are fearful of emphasizing "career preparation" in schools. Schools, they say, should not principally be about meeting the needs of employers or about molding students to fit certain economic roles. Critics of this proposal say that schools should emphasize education, not training, and they fear a program of this kind will lead to the channeling of schoolchildren or the sorting of students into certain kinds of jobs or career tracks. Children should not have their futures determined in this way by businesspeople, politicians, or educational administrators. Education should be about opening up possibilities, not narrowing them. Students should not be viewed as products or commodities.

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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.

***POSITIONS:***

The Michigan Manufacturers Association has indicated its support for the career technical aspects of the bill. (2-25-97)

The Michigan Education Association supports the concept of the bill. (4-7-97)

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