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**SFA****BILL ANALYSIS**

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Senate Bill 215 (as introduced 2-20-97)  
Sponsor: Senator Alma Wheeler Smith  
Committee: Education

Date Completed: 10-13-97

### **CONTENT**

**The bill would amend the Revised School Code to raise the mandatory school attendance age from 16 years to 18 years, and to permit a student age 16, 17, or 18 years to complete some or all the requirements for a high school diploma by completing an alternative education program, as specified in the bill.**

#### Mandatory Attendance

Under the Code, every parent, guardian, or other person in the State 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 Code also permits, in certain cases, a person age seven to 16 who resides in a school district and who has been deemed a juvenile disorderly person to be assigned to an ungraded school or departments based on three categories of pupils (i.e, children who are habitual truants; children who are incorrigibly turbulent and disobedient while attending school; and, children who are not attending school and who habitually frequent streets and other public places). The bill would raise the mandatory attendance age under both of these provisions to the child's 18th birthday.

In addition, if a child age 16 or 17 provided to the school district proof that he or she was engaged in regular employment averaging at least 25 hours per week and that the employment was necessitated by economic hardship or family need, the child could satisfy the Code's school attendance requirements by attending a public school at least 15 hours per week.

#### Alternative Education

The Code specifies that a child is not required to attend a public school in any of the following cases: the child is regularly attending and is being taught in a State-approved nonpublic school; the child is under nine years of age and does not reside within 2-1/2 miles by the nearest traveled road of a public school; the child is age 12 or 13 and is attending confirmation classes for up to five months; the child is enrolled in a public school while attending religious instruction classes for up to two class hours per week; the child graduated from high school or fulfilled all the requirements for high school graduation; or, the child is being educated at the child's home by his or her parent or legal guardian.

The bill would add that a school board could offer, and a pupil age 16, 17, or 18 could complete some or all of the requirements for a high school diploma by successfully completing one or a combination of the following: an alternative education program approved by the Department of Education; a program of vocational education that included apprenticeship or work study and that

required the pupil to attend school at least 10 hours per week for the entire school year; a program of independent study that was approved by the school district and met State Board of Education guidelines for independent study; and/or academic course work at a community college.

A community college or, upon request by the board of a constituent school district, an intermediate school board, either solely or as part of a consortium of intermediate school districts, could provide services or conduct cooperative educational programs related to an alternative education program. An intermediate school board could charge a constituent school district for the costs of services provided under these provisions.

A child age 16 or 17 could satisfy the Code's school attendance requirements by attending an alternative education program according to the proposed requirements.

MCL 380.1561 et al.

Legislative Analyst: L. Arasim

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

The bill would increase the cost of State and local government as described below.

Under current law, a school district receives a foundation allowance for each pupil in membership. A district's total foundation allowance revenue is equal to the foundation allowance per pupil multiplied by the full-time equivalent (FTE) pupil membership in the district. The local share of the foundation allowance is generally 18 mills levied on nonhomestead taxable property in the district. The remaining cost is paid by the State (except for districts with foundation allowances in excess of \$6,962 per pupil in FY 1997-98, which must levy additional local millage to receive their entire foundation allowance).

Under current law, in order to generate a full foundation allowance (be counted as a 1.0 FTE pupil), a student must be enrolled and in attendance on both the February and September pupil membership count days and have an educational program that offers at least 1,041 hours of instruction during the 1997-98 school year. A student enrolled for less than 1,041 hours can generate only a portion of a foundation allowance. An exception, however, in the State School Aid Act currently permits pupils in grades 9 to 12 for whom it is determined that a reduced schedule is in their best educational interest, to have an educational schedule of 80% of the required hours and still generate a 1.0 pupil membership.

The bill would require students to stay in school until age 18. Students would be permitted to satisfy the school attendance requirement through several programs including part-time attendance of 15 hours per week (for a student with economic hardship who is working at least 25 hours per week), alternative education, independent study, attendance at a community college, or a program of vocational training at a worksite and at least 10 hours per week of academic work. A student attending school 15 hours per week would generate approximately 0.5 FTE pupil membership. Students in independent study could be counted in pupil membership only to the extent that the independent study took place in the presence of a certified teacher. Students attending a community college on their own would not generate a pupil membership; however, pupils in a cooperative educational program operated by a community college could be counted in pupil membership by the cooperating school district.

The fiscal impact of the bill would depend on the number of students selecting the various options. It is estimated that the bill could cost the State up to \$300 million annually. To the extent that students chose part-time programs to fulfill their educational obligation, the cost would be reduced. The State School Aid Act appropriation for the foundation allowance would need to be increased to support the estimated additional expenditures. If additional funding were not provided for the

foundation allowance, payments to districts would be prorated.

Assuming that the foundation allowance appropriation was increased to pay fully for the additional pupils, local districts would receive increased State foundation allowance payments. Local districts also would have increased operating costs due to the additional pupils. The impact on local school districts would vary depending on factors such as the programs selected by students, the amount of classroom space available for the additional students, and whether enrollment in a district was generally increasing or decreasing.

Fiscal Analyst: E. Pratt

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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.