

STATE AID TO PUBLIC SCHOOLS FOR PRIVATE AND HOME SCHOOLERS IN PUBLIC KINDERGARTEN

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House Bill 4790 (reported from committee w/o amendment)
Sponsor: Rep. Edward McBroom
Committee: Education
Complete to 9-15-15

Analysis available at
<http://www.legislature.mi.gov>

BRIEF SUMMARY: The bill would expand the definition of "pupil" so that privately-schooled and home-schooled students enrolled in a public school kindergarten could be counted as "pupils" for the purpose of state membership aid, without seeking approval from school officials in a pupil's school district of residence.

FISCAL IMPACT: To the extent that the bill would increase overall public school enrollments, it could create additional costs for both the state and local school districts. Currently there are approximately 10,300 nonpublic shared-time pupils counted in membership in grades 1-12, which at the FY 2015-16 average foundation allowance of approximately \$7,565, costs about \$77.9 million. An exact breakout of shared-time pupils by grade level is not currently available, but if the bill increased the number of shared-time pupils by the current average per grade, it would increase pupils by about 860 at an additional annual cost of \$6.5 million. However, if the marginal cost of educating an additional student is lower than the increased funding received by a school district, the school district may benefit.

THE APPARENT PROBLEM:

Now under the law, the parents of students who are enrolled in grades 1 to 12 in a non-public school, or who are being home-schooled, can also enroll their students in a local public school district, public charter school, or public intermediate school district for any curricular offering. However, state school aid reimburses the district only for curricular offerings that are available to full-time pupils in the minor's grade level or age group during regularly scheduled school hours. And, for the purposes of state aid, a student enrolled is a part-time pupil (so the foundation grant is pro-rated).

Statewide, many school districts open their course offerings to home-schooled and privately schooled students. The arrangements are voluntary and locally negotiated, so contracts vary from district to district. For example, access to vaunted music programs are sought in some districts, while others offer foreign languages. Generally students attend the public school for a short period during the day, transported by their parents. However, in some districts, public school teachers travel to private schools to teach.

Legislation was introduced earlier in this legislative session—House Bill 4594—to allow an expansion of shared public school programs, so they may begin in kindergarten, rather than waiting until first grade. See **Background Information**, below. Companion legislation is now needed to ensure public funding for these curricular arrangements that will serve home-schooled or privately-schooled kindergartners.

THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:

House Bill 4970 would amend the State School Aid Act to change the definition of "pupil" so that privately-schooled and home-schooled students enrolled in a public school kindergarten could be counted as "pupils" for the purpose of membership aid, without seeking approval from school officials in a pupil's school district of residence. The bill would take effect 90 days after being enacted into law.

The bill is tie-barred to House Bill 4594, meaning that it cannot not take effect unless House Bill 4594 also is enacted into law. See ***Background Information***, below.

The term "pupil" is defined to mean a person in membership in a public school. The law specifies that a school district must have the approval of a pupil's district of residence to count the pupil in its membership. However, the law also specifies 15 exceptions to that requirement, one of which is that approval by the pupil's district of residence is not required for "a nonpublic part-time pupil enrolled in grades 1 to 12 in accordance with Section 166b." House Bill 4970 extends this exception to cover part-time pupils enrolled in kindergarten.

MCL 388.1606

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

A companion bill, House Bill 4594, would amend the School Aid Act (at MCL 388.1766b) to allow the parents of privately-schooled and home-schooled students to also enroll their children in a public school kindergarten to take advantage of curricular opportunities. The bill would take effect 90 days after being enacted into law.

House Bill 4594 was reported from the House Education Committee and passed unanimously by the full House on June 16, 2015, with a vote of 110 yeas, 0 nays. The bill now awaits action in the Senate Education Committee.

ARGUMENTS:

For:

Proponents of this bill say it is needed to ensure that public schools receive state aid to pay for the curricular services offered to home-schooled or privately-schooled kindergartners. Supporters note that the bill is tie-barred to House Bill 4594, a bill to provide learning opportunities to home-schooled and private-school kindergartners—enhancing their curricular offerings one year earlier than is now allowed under the law.

The supporters of both bills say the popularity of public school programs in the earliest elementary school grade has increased since the onset of the full-day kindergarten. Proponents also say forging social connections from an early age with fellow students in public schools is an advantage, because most privately schooled students, and many home-

schooled students complete the final years of their schooling in a community's public school system.

Finally, supporters of the legislation say that locally designed shared-time agreements build communities in positive ways, encouraging productive partnerships among community stakeholders.

POSITIONS:

The Michigan Department of Education supports the bill. (9-10-15)

The Michigan Association of Non-Public Schools supports the bill. (9-10-15)

The Michigan Catholic Conference supports the bill. (9-10-15)

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