

Legislative Analysis



REPEAL REQUIREMENTS FOR PUBLIC SCHOOL LETTER GRADES AND RANKINGS

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House Bill 4166 (H-1) as reported from committee

Sponsor: Rep. Matt Koleszar

Committee: Education

Revised 3-22-23

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

(Enacted as Public Act 34 of 2023)

BRIEF SUMMARY: House Bill 4166 would amend the Revised School Code to remove a current requirement that the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) assign letter grades and rankings to public schools. The amended sections relate to how MDE compiles lists of the lowest-performing schools as determined through those grades and rankings and implement certain accountability measures for schools determined to be in the bottom 5% of schools through those grades and rankings.

FISCAL IMPACT: House Bill 4166 would decrease costs for the state and would have no fiscal impact on school districts, intermediate school districts (ISDs), and public school academies (PSAs, or charter schools). MDE would realize reduced costs because the department would no longer be required to administer the statewide school A-to-F grading system and other rankings and accountability measures currently required under section 1280g of the code. However, MDE would still be required to maintain the School Index Score and related accountability measures due to federal ESSA requirements.

THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:

Under current law, by September 1 of each year, MDE is required to release A-to-F grades for public schools based on their performance on certain indicators as well as rank schools based on other metrics. These published grades and rankings are in addition to MDE's School Index Score, which also measures school performance.¹

Under the bill, the School Index Score and related accountability measures based on that score would become the state's sole form of school performance scores and school accountability. References to actions that must be taken in regard to schools that are ranked lowest through the A-to-F grade and ranking system would be revised to refer instead to the school accountability system that is put in place under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, the federal education law). This is understood to mean the School Index Score or a successor measurement of school performance implemented by MDE in accordance with ESSA's school accountability requirements.

The bill also would remove requirements that MDE compile a list of "lowest-performing schools" based on the letter grades and rankings assigned and that districts and charter school authorizers not reopen a school at the same location as a school previously designated as low-performing unless certain criteria are met. Additional references and provisions relating to A-to-F performance grades and related accountability measures would be removed and replaced

¹ <https://www.mischooldata.org/school-index/>

with references to the accountability system that is in place and was approved by the United States Department of Education in accordance with the requirements of ESSA.

Finally, the bill would repeal section 1280g of the code, which contains requirements relating to the letter grade and ranking systems and actions MDE must take regarding the schools deemed to be the lowest-performing in the state under those metrics.²

MCL 380.502 et seq. (amended) and MCL 380.1280g (repealed)

BACKGROUND:

Michigan has two school performance measurements that are released annually. The first is the School Index Score, which was developed by the Michigan Department of Education to comply with school accountability provisions of the Every Student Succeeds Act, the federal law that governs public schools and education. The second is the A-to-F scores and rankings, which are required under state law.

ARGUMENTS:

For:

The Michigan Department of Education contends that the A-to-F system does not meet the requirements of ESSA and that it also offers an incomplete and misleading picture of school performance compared to the index score. Supporters of the bill echo these concerns, arguing that the A-to-F system is redundant with the School Index Score system and tends to be a better measure of which schools and districts serve impoverished students than a meaningful metric to evaluate a school's quality.

Against:

Opponents of the bill say that the A-to-F school performance grade is an easier system to understand than the MDE's score system and that it helps parents and guardians to quickly judge a school's quality in picking a school that will best meet their child's needs.

POSITIONS:

A representative of the Michigan Department of Education testified in support of the bill. (3-14-23)

The following entities indicated support for the bill (3-14-23):

- Michigan Association of School Boards (3-21-23)
- Michigan Education Association (3-14-23)
- Education Advocates of West Michigan (3-14-23)
- Macomb ISD (3-14-23)
- Michigan Alliance for Student Advancement (3-14-23)
- Michigan Association of Secondary School Principals (3-14-23)
- Michigan Association of Superintendents and Administrators (3-14-23)

² For a description of 2018 PA 601, which added section 1280g to the Revised School Code: <https://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/2017-2018/billanalysis/House/pdf/2017-HLA-5526-F7D78799.pdf>

- Norway-Vulcan Area Schools (3-14-23)
- Oakland Schools (3-14-23)
- Wayne Regional Educational Service Agency (3-14-23)

A representative of the Michigan Association of Public School Academies testified with a neutral position on the bill. (3-14-23)

The Michigan Council of Charter School Authorizers indicated a neutral position on the bill. (3-14-23)

Representatives of the following entities testified in opposition to the bill (3-14-23):

- Business Leaders for Michigan
- Detroit Regional Chamber of Commerce
- Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce

The following entities indicated opposition to the bill:

- Detroit Public Schools Community District (3-21-23)
- Great Lakes Education Project Education Fund (3-14-23)
- Mackinac Center for Public Policy (3-21-23)

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■ This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan House Fiscal Agency staff for use by House members in their deliberations and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.