



Senate Fiscal Agency
P.O. Box 30036
Lansing, Michigan 48909-7536



Telephone: (517) 373-5383
Fax: (517) 373-1986

Senate Bill 162 (as enacted)
Sponsor: Senator Sean McCann
Senate Committee: Education
House Committee: Education

PUBLIC ACT 111 of 2023

Date Completed: 8-15-23

RATIONALE

According to testimony, Michigan schools are facing a shortage of school counselors. Prospective counselors may be discouraged by the high educational requirements and practicum hours needed to enter the profession. Current counselors may be burdened by the general shortage of school staff, requiring them to assume roles unrelated to counseling. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic may have negatively affected counselors and the students they support, contributing to burnout and emotional fatigue.¹ Some people believe that this counselor shortage deprives students of a vital mental health resource. Accordingly, it was suggested that Michigan ease the process of becoming a school counselor in the State.

CONTENT

The bill amended the Revised School Code to do the following:

- **Modify the requirements for an individual to serve as a school counselor.**
- **Allow an individual with a counseling license from another state, country, or Federally recognized Indian tribe to obtain reciprocity if he or she has served as a counselor for three years and successfully completes the Department of Education (MDE) school counselor examination.**
- **Allow the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) to issue a preliminary counselor license for an individual who has completed at least 30 semester hours in an approved school counselor preparation program and successfully completes the MDE school counselor examination.**
- **Allow the SPI to issue a temporary school counselor license to an individual with a counseling license from another state, country, or from a Federally recognized Indian tribe if the individual does not meet certain requirements.**

The bill took effect July 27, 2023.

School Counselor License

Among other things, the Code prescribes qualifications an individual must have for the board of a school district or intermediate school district (ISD) to allow him or her to serve as a school counselor. Previously, a board could not allow an individual to serve in a counseling role in the school district unless he or she met one of the following:

- The individual held a valid teaching certificate with a school counseling endorsement.

¹ Altavena, Lily, "Michigan near rock bottom for the student to counselor ratios in the nation. How it affects students", *Detroit Free Press*, Dec. 6, 2021.

- The individual had a master's degree awarded after the completion of an approved school counselor program that included specified skills and content areas, had completed the MDE's school counselor examination, and had been recommended by an approved school counselor education program to provide school counselor services.
- The individual had at least five years of successful experience serving in a school counseling role in another state within the immediately preceding seven-year period and had completed the MDE's school counselor examination.

The bill deleted these requirements. Instead, under the bill, the board of a school district or ISD may not allow an individual to serve in a counseling role unless the individual holds a valid school counselor credential. The SPI must issue a school counselor license only to an individual who meets one or more of the following requirements:

- The individual holds a master's degree awarded after the completion of a school counselor education program that is approved by the SPI based on standards developed by the MDE in consultation with practicing school counselors, representatives from school counselor preparations programs, and State associations representing school counselors and successfully completed the MDE school counselor examination.
- The individual holds a school counselor license from another state, country, or Federally recognized Indian tribe, holds a master's degree awarded after completion of a school counselor program, and has at least three years of successful experience serving in a school counseling role or successfully completed the MDE school counselor examination.

"Individual holding a school counselor license from another state, country, or Federally recognized Indian tribe" or "individual who holds a school counselor license from another state, country, or Federally recognized Indian tribe" means an individual with a valid school counselor credential who is eligible for a school counselor credential in the state or country or with the Federally recognized Indian tribe in which the individual holds the credential or is eligible for the credential.

"School counselor credential" means the following:

- A school counselor endorsement on a valid Michigan teaching certificate.
- A preliminary school counselor license as added by the bill.
- A temporary school counselor license as added by the bill.
- A school counselor license.

Under the bill, "school counselor credential" applies to a school counselor credential from another state, country, or Federally recognized tribe. The SPI must deny a Michigan school counselor credential to an individual for fraud, material misrepresentation, or concealment in the individual's application for a license or a conviction for which an individual's State board approval could be suspended under Section 1539b. (Generally, Section 1539b prescribes the penalties to an individual who holds State board approval and has been convicted of a crime.)

Preliminary Counselor License

Under the bill, the SPI must issue a preliminary school counselor license to an individual enrolled in an approved school counselor preparation program only if he or she meets the following requirements:

- The individual has completed at least 30 semester hours in an approved school counselor preparation program.

-- The individual has successfully completed the MDE school counselor examination.

Temporary Counselor License

If an individual holding a school counselor license from another state, country, or Federally recognized Indian tribe applies for a Michigan school counselor license and meets all the requirements for the license except for passage of the reciprocity requirements, the SPI must issue a nonrenewable temporary school counselor license valid for one year to the individual. The bill prohibits the SPI from issuing a Michigan school counselor license to the individual after the temporary license expired unless the individual completes the licensing requirements.

MCL 380.1233

ARGUMENTS

(Please note: The arguments contained in this analysis originate from sources outside the Senate Fiscal Agency. The Senate Fiscal Agency neither supports nor opposes legislation.)

Supporting Argument

Extending reciprocity to counselors outside of Michigan will help reduce the counselor shortage in the State. During the 2019-2020 school year, Michigan had the second-highest student to counselor ratio in the nation at 671:1.² The American School Counselor Association recommends a 250:1 ratio. With rates of anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues rising among young people, the State does not have enough counselors to support them. Adopting a reciprocal credential system to attract counselors from other states, countries, and from Federally recognized Indian tribes will improve Michigan's student to counselor ratio and bolster its mental health infrastructure.

Supporting Argument

Removing barriers to entering the school counseling field may encourage more counselors to pursue the profession. Previously, to serve as a counselor in Michigan, an individual had to meet several requirements. Firstly, he or she had to hold a master's degree awarded after completion of an approved school counselor program. Secondly, the individual had to successfully pass the MDE school counselor examination. Thirdly, he or she needed a recommendation from an approved school counselor education program to provide school counseling services.

An individual also could have served as a counselor if he or she held a valid teaching certificate with a school counselor endorsement. To receive this endorsement, an individual had to fulfill the latter two requirements listed above and complete a 600-hour practicum under a credentialed school counselor's supervision, with at least half of those hours spent in a school setting (R 390.1303). Many considered these requirements cumbersome. The State will encourage prospective school counselors to pursue the profession by streamlining the process of receiving a school counselor license.

Legislative Analyst: Abby Schneider

FISCAL IMPACT

The MDE will experience one-time and ongoing costs to update the school counselor credential requirement, certify out-of-State counselors, and issue a preliminary school counselor license. The costs will include one-time information technology costs to update the teacher certification system, and staff to update the new school counselor certification requirements.

² *Id.*

The MDE already has begun to update the teacher certification system and the full one-time costs likely will be supported with current appropriation. Ongoing costs will be minimal and likely supported with current appropriations. The bill will have an indeterminate fiscal impact on the MDE, local ISDs, school districts, and public school academies. Schools likely will be able to hire school counselors who hold a certification from out-of-State more easily, which may reduce the amount of time to hire school counselors. The overall costs throughout the State are indeterminate because of the differing needs and situations for each school.

Fiscal Analyst: Cory Savino, PhD

SAS\S2324\s162ea

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.