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SUMMARY ACCREDITATION

House Bill 5029 with committee amendments
First Analysis (9-27-95)

Sponsor: Rep. William R. Bryant
Committee: Education

THE APPARENT PROBLEM:

Public Act 335 of 1993 (House Bill 5121) amended the School Code in a number of ways, including changes to the process by which the state grants accreditation to public schools. The accreditation process was initiated by Public Act 25 of 1990, which dealt generally with school improvement. If a school is accredited that means it has been "certified by the state board as having met or exceeded state-board approved standards established for 6 areas of school operation: administration and school organization, curricula, staff, school plant and facilities, school and community relations, and school improvement plans and student outcomes." One element in accreditation is a building-level evaluation. Public Act 335 required the Department of Education to develop standards for determining when a school qualified for "summary accreditation" without a full building-level evaluation. The department developed these standards, according to education policy analysts, based on the factors cited above, as well as others from Public Act 335, and based on the performance of students on Michigan education assessment program (MEAP) tests. Reportedly, in the five percent of schools that received summary accreditation this past April, 66 percent or more of students received satisfactory MEAP scores over a three-year period. (Most districts were classified as interim status, and a few districts were unaccredited. In the unaccredited districts, less than half the students received satisfactory MEAP scores.) Some people believe the accreditation process is overly strict and have proposed additional criteria for summary accreditation.

THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:

The bill would amend the accreditation section of the School Code to provide that a school would have to be considered accredited without a full building-level evaluation, whether or not it met the

department's standards, if it met one or both of two specified criteria. The criteria would be if:

- a) the public school meets the accreditation standards of a regional accrediting body, if those standards had been approved by the State Board of Education and determined by the board to be results-oriented and reasonable; and
- b) the MEAP test scores of the school's students over the immediately preceding five years improved at a rate that put the school in the top 50 percent of all public schools in the rate of improvement.

MCL 380.1280

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:

There is no information at present.

ARGUMENTS:

For:

The bill would provide two additional criteria for the state to use in granting summary accreditation to schools. One would allow summary accreditation where the standards of a regional accrediting body had been met (provided the state board approved those standards). The other would base summary accreditation on significant improvement in student performance on MEAP tests over a five-year period. In both case, evaluation would have to be based on results-oriented factors.

POSITIONS:

The Michigan Education Association supports the bill. (9-26-95)

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