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INTERVENTION/PREVENTION GRANTS FOR SCHOOL DISTRICTS

House Bill 5699 (Substitute H-1) First Analysis (5-5-98)

Sponsor: Rep. Samuel Buzz Thomas
Committee: Education

THE APPARENT PROBLEM:

Schools should be safe places for teaching and learning. Amid all the disagreements over education policy, there is widespread agreement about that. Teachers should not have to worry about assaults and verbal abuse from their students; students should not stay away from school out of fear for their personal safety. Violence and the threat of violence should not prevent schools from being effective communities of learning. Fear should not permeate school classrooms, playgrounds, and school buses. A House Subcommittee on Violence in the Schools has recently completed several months of conducting hearings around the state on the issue and has transmitted proposed legislation to the House Committee on Education. In addition to exploring how to give schools the tools to remove violent and disruptive students and how to develop disciplinary education settings for those students, the subcommittee also heard testimony on the value of early intervention and prevention programs at the school and community levels. The report from the chair of the subcommittee noted:

"Early intervention with troubled students can help prevent assaultive behavior from ever occurring. In addition, a variety of successful prevention programs have been developed across the state. One example is the student assistance program that includes conflict resolution, peer mediation and anger management training. Other models include the Safe Havens after school program and school-based community resource centers."

Legislation has been developed that would create a grant program administered at the state level to fund and evaluate locally developed programs aimed at addressing the problems of school-aged children and their families through collaborative approaches.

THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:

The bill would amend the Revised School Code to create an intervention/prevention grant program in the Department of Education to provide grants to school districts for "locally designed, innovative local programs that enhance educational attainment through coordinated services to respond to the needs of students and to provide a safe and secure learning environment." Districts could apply individually for grants or a consortium of districts could apply jointly. The State Board of Education would select grant recipients after the review of applications and making of recommendations by the superintendent of public instruction. The state superintendent would administer the grant program under the direction of the state board and the Department of Education would be required to develop and implement an evaluation system to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the grant program. The State Board of Education would have to report to the legislature by May 1, 1999 on its progress in developing the evaluation system and in developing and implementing the intervention/prevention grant program.

The State Board of Education would be required to select grant recipients for local programs in operation at the beginning of the 1998-99 school year by August 1, 1998. Grant recipients for other school years would have to be selected by January 1 for programs in operation in the following school year.

The bill specifies that the grant program is intended to be in addition to funding for at-risk students under Section 31a of the State School Aid Act and "shall not diminish funding for school districts under that section." The bill also specifies that the "the legislature shall annually appropriate funds for grants." (A companion bill, House Bill 5700, currently in the House Appropriations Committee, would provide \$75 million for the grant program.)

House Bill 5699 (5-5-98)

Application Process. In preparing a grant application, a school district or consortium of districts would have to consult with the appropriate multipurpose collaborative body. That term refers to "an inclusive planning and implementation body of human service organizations at the city, county, or multicounty level." The bill would specify that a multipurpose collaborative body would be responsible for local direction and coordination of state-sponsored, federal-sponsored, and foundation-sponsored collaborative enterprises for services and assistance to children and families.

An application would have to include:

- data on the incidence of juvenile violence and crime in the geographic area to be served;
- an assessment of local resources for responding to the needs of children who live in conditions placing them at risk of school failure, including local deficiencies in resources;
- a detailed plan for removing barriers to success in school that exist for these children and for minimizing disruptive and violent behavior among all students;
- a statement of whether and to what extent the district or consortium intended to contract with local, private, nonprofit corporations to staff, operate, or otherwise provide services for one or more elements of the plan;
- a statement of how the grant funds would be used to address local problems, what other resources would be used to address the problems, and how all available community resources and the components of the proposed plan would be coordinated to enhance the effectiveness of existing services and of proposed services;
- a statement of how the proposed plan would assist a school district and its schools in implementing its local school improvement plans; and
- a process for assessing on an annual basis the success of the local plan in addressing problems.

Detailed Plan/Program Models. The detailed plan referred to above that must be part of the application would have to include proposed goals and anticipated outcomes prepared after consultation with the multipurpose collaborative body. The plan would have to provide for the establishment or expansion of

programs that have components based on one or more of the following models or other collaborative models. The bill cites the following models:

- School-based resource center model: a school-based resource center is a school-based center that coordinates the delivery of comprehensive and integrated services that prepare children and their parents to attain academic and social success.
- After-school program model: an after-school program is a program that provides high-quality, educationally appropriate, and recreational activities to students after the regular school day.
- Communities in schools program model: a community partnership among public agencies, private nonprofit agencies, volunteer organizations, and local businesses that delivers services to students who are at risk of dropping out of school or who display discipline problems. Services offered are based on an assessment of local needs and resources.
- Alternative learning program model: a program that provides institutionalized programs outside of a standard classroom setting in a caring atmosphere in which students learn the skills necessary to redirect their lives and return to a standard classroom setting.
- Safe schools program model: a locally designed program for making schools safe for students and school employees. The program may involve peer mediation and conflict resolution activities.

The bill is tie-barred to House Bill 5700 and six other bills that are part of a "violence in schools" package: Senate Bill 313, and House Bills 4075, 5424, 5478, 5482, and 5696.

MCL 380.1306

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:

House Bill 5700 would amend the State School Aid Act to provide \$75 million for prevention/intervention grants. The bill has been referred from the House Education Committee to the House Appropriations Committee.

ARGUMENTS:

For:

This bill is one of a package of bills addressing issues related to violence in the schools. It proposes funding

programs by local school districts aimed at intervention in and prevention of factors that lead to problems in the schools. A special House subcommittee heard testimony from a number of proponents of these kinds of programs. The grant program will allow for the evaluation of a variety of different collaborative strategies and model policies aimed at improving the school environment in which education takes place. The grant proposals will come from local communities and be tailored to their own special needs. Detailed plans accompanying grant applications will have to detail how the chosen strategy or model meets the stated goals and will have to explain the intended outcomes upon which evaluations can be based. Spending money on intervention and prevention is cost effective if it prevents violent behavior that would otherwise lead to more costly, after-the-fact, treatment and punishment.

Response:

It should be noted that many school districts are already engaged in efforts of the kind this bill aims to promote.

POSITIONS:

The Department of Management of Budget does not support the bill because of funding concerns. (5-4-98)

Analyst: C. Couch

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