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BILL ANALYSIS

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Senate Bill 72 (as reported without amendment)
Sponsor: Senator Alan Sanborn
Committee: Health Policy

Date Completed: 11-9-04

RATIONALE

Both public and private agencies provide services in many communities to pregnant women and parents who may need assistance with their situations. Services such as counseling, health care including prenatal care and delivery for pregnant women, and day care for children might be available but not necessarily from the same resource. The difficulty of locating services may be compounded for college students, especially if they are unfamiliar with the community. While some colleges and universities provide centralized resources for students who are parents or pregnant, or at least disseminate information about different resources available in the on-campus and off-campus communities, others do not have the financial capability of providing those services or referrals to their students. In order to help pregnant and parenting students achieve their academic goals, some people believe that the State should assist colleges and universities in providing coordinated information regarding available resources.

CONTENT

The bill would create the "Pregnant and Parenting Student Services Act" to do all of the following:

- **Establish the "Pregnant and Parenting Student Services Fund".**
- **Allow the Department of Community Health (DCH) to award grants from the Fund to institutions of higher education that established and operated a "Pregnant and Parenting Student Services Office".**
- **Require an Office to perform certain functions, including establishing**

programs with service providers to meet students' needs in specific areas.

- **Require an Office to provide referrals for prenatal care, delivery, infant or foster care, or adoption, and on family planning to students who requested that information.**
- **Prohibit an Office from providing referrals for abortion services.**
- **Allow the DCH to promulgate rules to implement and administer the bill.**

Fund

The Pregnant and Parenting Student Services Fund would be established in the Department of Treasury. The Fund would consist of appropriations; money allocated, donated, or paid to the Fund from any source; and interest and earnings from Fund investments. The State Treasurer would have to direct the investment of the Fund.

Money in the Fund at the close of a fiscal year would remain in the Fund and could not revert to the General Fund. Money in the Fund could be appropriated for grants under the bill and the administrative costs of the DCH in implementing and administering it. The State Treasurer would have to make a grant from the Fund to an institution of higher education upon receiving a written notice from the DCH.

Grants

An institution of higher education that had established and operated or agreed to establish and operate a Pregnant and Parenting Student Services Office that met the bill's requirements would be eligible for

and could receive a grant. ("Institution of higher education" would mean a degree- or certificate-granting public or private college or university, junior college, or community college in Michigan.) The DCH could establish the form or format of a grant application and could require that an institution of higher education provide additional information after the Department had reviewed its grant application.

The DCH could award a grant to one or more eligible institutions of higher education, but could not award more than four grants, for pilot programs, during the first year after the bill's effective date. The DCH would have to determine which, and how many, eligible institutions would receive a grant to establish and operate an Office.

If the DCH awarded a grant under the bill, it would have to give the State Treasurer a written notice that contained both the name of the institution of higher education receiving the grant and the amount of the grant, and that requested payment of the grant amount from the Fund.

Office

An institution of higher education could establish and operate a Pregnant and Parenting Student Services Office on the institution's campus. The Office annually would have to assess the performance of the institution and the Office in meeting the following needs of students on campus who were pregnant or who were custodial parents or legal guardians of a minor:

- Comprehensive student health care.
- Family housing.
- Child care.
- Flexible or alternative academic scheduling.
- Education concerning responsible parenting for mothers and fathers.

An Office would have to identify public and private service providers that were qualified to meet the needs described above, both on campus and within the local community, and establish programs with qualified providers it selected to meet those needs. An Office also would have to assist students in locating and obtaining services that met one or more of those needs. If appropriate, an Office would have to provide referrals for prenatal care, delivery, infant care, foster

care, or adoption. If a student requested information, referrals for family planning also would have to be provided. An Office could not provide referrals for abortion services.

By the date determined by the DCH, an Office would have to provide the Department with an annual report that itemized the Office's expenditures during the preceding fiscal year and contained a review and evaluation of the Office's performance in fulfilling its obligations under the bill. The DCH would have to identify specific performance criteria and standards that an Office would have to use in preparing the annual report. The Department could establish the form or format of the report and could require that an Office provide additional information after the DCH reviewed the report.

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

Knowing where and how to secure services may be a daunting task for any parent or pregnant woman in need of them, but that difficulty can be compounded if the person is a college student. For example, a pregnant or parenting student may be far from home and unfamiliar with the off-campus community, and might have unique issues to deal with in the areas of housing, transportation, child care, and academics. Even where a range of services is available to those students, information about services such as parent training, child care, family housing, and prenatal or pediatric care, may be difficult to gather because it is distributed by different offices. If students cannot obtain needed assistance because they do not know about it or even how to find out about it, the students might be more likely to drop out of school than if the information were readily available.

By providing for a system to fund Pregnant and Parenting Student Services Offices at institutions of higher education, the bill could create an incentive for schools to concentrate in one location information about services available to their students. More efficient delivery of that information, in turn, would help meet the needs of pregnant

and parenting students and could bolster their likelihood of success in parenting, academics, and a future career. Reportedly, similar programs in alternative high schools led to a drop in the number of abortions among teen-agers.

Supporting Argument

An institution of higher education's Pregnant and Parenting Student Services Office, as proposed by the bill, would be a comprehensive program to aid student-parents. An Office would have to serve both mothers and fathers, provide information about services available from the institution and in the local community, and provide referrals for such essential needs as prenatal care, delivery of babies, infant care, foster care, and adoption. Disseminating information on the availability of those services and ensuring that a student-parent had access to the services, through referral by the Office, would benefit not only the students and their children but also the campus and local communities.

Opposing Argument

A one-stop office at a State-supported institution where students could learn about pregnancy and parenting services should make available, at least upon request, information about all legal options, which include abortion. As proposed by the bill, an Office would not advocate any particular action, but simply would be an information clearinghouse. The bill, however, would ban referrals for abortion services. Thus, a student who was considering this option would be left without relevant information. The bill's restriction also could prevent Federal funds from being used to support the proposed program, since recipients of Federal family planning money are required to provide information and counseling regarding pregnancy termination along with information on prenatal care, adoption, and other issues.

On the other hand, the State would not have to be involved in the program, if it relied solely on private donations. Individuals and organizations that were willing to contribute funds could donate the money directly to institutions to open offices similar to those that could be created under the bill, rather than channeling the money through the State. That way, the State would not be put in the position of promoting a particular agenda.

Response: The bill would address students' difficulty in finding programs and support available to them. Information about clinics that perform abortions is readily available from other sources, such as the Yellow Pages. According to Senate Health Policy Committee testimony, 85% of abortions are self-referred. Furthermore, although abortion is a legal option for women, the United States Supreme Court has ruled on several occasions that the landmark case *Roe v. Wade* does not prohibit a state from promoting childbirth.

Legislative Analyst: Julie Koval

FISCAL IMPACT

The proposed Fund would be financed via the appropriations process, so the fiscal impact would depend upon the annual appropriations for the Department of Community Health budget.

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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.