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SFA**BILL ANALYSIS**

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Senate Bill 364 (as introduced 4-2-03)
Sponsor: Senator Valde Garcia
Committee: Education

Date Completed: 4-3-03

CONTENT

The bill would amend the Revised School Code to do the following:

- Remove the requirement that schools provide a minimum of 180 days of pupil instruction, or forfeit a percentage of their State aid allocation.**
- Eliminate the two allocated "snow days" per district that currently count as days of pupil instruction.**
- Reduce by 12 hours the required minimum number of pupil instruction hours.**
- Delete a provision that at least 75% of a district's membership must be in attendance on any day of pupil instruction or the district will forfeit a percentage of its State aid.**

Days and Hours

Currently, a district must hold at least 180 days of pupil instruction, or forfeit from its total State aid allocation for each day of failure 1/180 of its total State aid allocation. The bill would eliminate this requirement and the resulting penalty.

Under the Code, a districts also must provide a minimum number of 1,110 hours of pupil instruction, or forfeit from its total State aid allocation the ratio of the number of hours the district was not in compliance in relation to the required minimum number of hours. The bill would change the number of required hours to 1,098, but retain the requirement that any district not in compliance forfeit a percentage of its State aid allocation.

Currently, districts failing to meet both the 180-day and the 1,110-hour requirements are subject to only the higher of the two penalties. The bill would eliminate this provision.

The Code specifies that a school experimenting with an altered school year schedule may apply for a waiver for the 180-day requirement, provided it meets the required number of hours, and is consistent with all State Board of Education policies on school improvement and restructuring. Schools providing alternative scheduling for kindergarten also are not subject to the 180-day rule if they provide a minimum number of hours as specified under the Code. The bill would delete these provisions.

Alternative education programs approved by the Department of Education may apply for a waiver of both the 180-day and the minimum-hour requirements. Under the bill, these programs would need to apply only for a waiver of the minimum number of hours.

Under the Code, school boards must submit to the Department by April 15 of each fiscal year the planned number of days and hours of pupil instruction for the school year ending in the fiscal year. The bill would require the boards to submit only the planned number of hours for the following fiscal year.

Snow Days

Under the Code, two days on which pupil instruction is not provided due to circumstances out of control of a district, such as severe storms, fires, epidemics, or health conditions, may be counted toward the 180-day requirement. The bill would delete this provision.

75% of Attendance

Currently, a district not having at least 75% of the district's membership in attendance on any day of pupil instruction must forfeit 1/180 of its State aid. The bill would eliminate this requirement and the resulting penalty.

MCL 388.1701

Legislative Analyst: Claire Layman

FISCAL IMPACT

The bill would eliminate the requirement for a minimum of 180 school days. The number of days necessary to complete a school year would be determined by each school district individually. A school district still would have to provide a minimum of 1,098 hours of pupil instruction. This proposed change would allow school districts to operate on a four-day school week if they so chose. There could be substantial savings to a school district that chose to complete its school year in less than the currently required 180 days.

Several school districts were asked in a survey to estimate their cost savings if they were allowed to operate on a four-day school week. The amount of savings based on those responses was broken down on a per-pupil basis. Based on those results, it is estimated that the cost savings of moving to a four-day school week, while maintaining a minimum of 1,098 hours of instruction, would range between \$300 and \$500 per pupil depending on the size of the school district. Larger school districts with more buildings would save at the higher end of the estimate while smaller districts with fewer buildings would realize savings at the lower end. The savings would result from a combination of lower salaries for certain staff and the building operation costs such as heat, electricity, water, etc. that would be avoided. (These cost saving estimates are based on a small sampling of school districts and the results among individual districts are indeterminate and could be more or less than the estimates provided here.)

Additionally, the bill would eliminate the two so called "snow days". Since there would no longer be a minimum number of days required, districts would not necessarily need to make up those days so long as they met the 1,098-hour requirement. Based on the survey results mentioned above, it is estimated that each day that must be made up under the current law provision costs a district an average of \$15 to \$25 per pupil. As long as a district did not need to make up these days, it could realize that saving.

Finally, current law requires that at least 75% of a district's membership be in attendance on each day of pupil instruction and that a district be penalized for each day that there is not a 75% attendance rate. This provision would be eliminated under the bill. Thus, districts would no longer have to comply with the 75% attendance requirement or be penalized for not doing so, and therefore could realize a saving as well. This could be of benefit to a district where, for example, a flu epidemic broke out and the district thus was being penalized for each day that it did not meet the 75% attendance requirement.

Fiscal Analyst: Joe Carrasco

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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.