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BILL ANALYSIS

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Senate Bill 1100 (Substitute S-1 as reported)
Sponsor: Senator Jason E. Allen
Committee: Education

Date Completed: 3-31-04

RATIONALE

Kingsley High School, located in southern Grand Traverse County, has been closed since early March. Heavy snows caused roof trusses to bend and break, making the building unsafe to occupy. High school students missed about a week of school before the district was able to relocate them in the middle school, in a parochial school, and in churches. In order to make up lost instructional time, the district has added 10 minutes to the end of each school day. Despite this additional time, and provided school is not closed again, high school students will have to make up about six hours after June 10th, the last scheduled day of school. Under the State School Aid Act a school that does not meet a minimum number of instructional hours must forfeit a percentage of its State aid. Although up to 30 hours of time lost may be counted as instructional hours, the Kingsley Area School District had already used its allotted "snow days". It has been suggested that the district be granted an additional 20 hours that it would not have to make up this school year; and that additional hours be made available for future, similar circumstances in all districts.

CONTENT

The bill would amend the State School Aid Act to require the Michigan Department of Education to count up to 20 additional hours as pupil instruction time for a school in which instruction was not provided due to structural damage that required the school to be closed in the 2003-2004 school year; as well as up to 30 hours for instruction time lost after April 1 in a school year, beginning in 2004-2005.

Currently, a district is required to provide at least 1,098 hours of pupil instruction, or forfeit a percentage of its State aid. The first 30 hours of instruction lost due to conditions out of the school's control, such as severe storms, fires, epidemics, or health conditions, must be counted as hours of pupil instruction. Under the bill, for the 2003-2004 school year only, a district with a school that lost pupil instruction time due to structural roof and truss damage that required the school to be closed, would have to be credited an additional 20 hours as pupil instruction time.

In addition, beginning in 2004-2005, the bill would require the Department to count as hours of pupil instruction up to 30 additional hours for which pupil instruction was not provided after April 1 of the applicable school year, due to unusual and extenuating occurrences, resulting from conditions not within the control of school authorities, such as storms, fires, or building damage.

MCL 388.1701

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

The bill would enable the Kingsley Area School District to recess for the summer as scheduled, on June 10. This is important because the buildings where high school students currently are housed are needed for summer programs, and because Kingsley High School seniors are scheduled to graduate June 4. While the district is only about six hours, or one day, short of

meeting the required 1,098 instructional hours for this school year, it is still possible that another snow or ice storm could close school for one or more days. The bill would provide for an additional cushion of 20 hours in that event. Additionally, the bill would waive for all districts in future years an additional 30 hours of instructional time lost after April 1. In the past (for example, in April 2003), ice storms have forced schools to close after the worst of the winter had passed, and a district had used all of its allotted snow days. While the Kingsley district and, presumably, others recognize the importance of providing students with as much instructional time as the law requires, this is not possible in rare instances. A district should not be penalized for acts of nature or other unforeseen circumstances by having to forfeit a percentage of its State aid, as the State School Aid Act requires of districts failing to meet the mandated number of instructional hours.

Legislative Analyst: Claire Layman

FISCAL IMPACT

The bill would have no fiscal impact on State government.

The proposed change would help prevent the local district from incurring any additional operational costs associated with providing the additional instructional hours required to meet the State's minimum of 1,098 hours of pupil instruction. The actual amount of additional operational costs is indeterminate; however, based on the average number of instructional hours in a day (6.5 hours), without the additional waiver of 20 hours of instruction, the district will have to provide instruction for an estimated three days.

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.