



Senate Fiscal Agency
P. O. Box 30036
Lansing, Michigan 48909-7536



BILL ANALYSIS

Telephone: (517) 373-5383
Fax: (517) 373-1986
TDD: (517) 373-0543

Senate Bill 482 (Substitute S-1 as reported)
Sponsor: Senator John J. Gleason
Committee: Education

Date Completed: 10-18-07

RATIONALE

The Michigan Promise Grant Act, enacted in 2006, provides for a \$4,000 scholarship to a student who is a resident of the State and who completes at least two years of postsecondary education with a GPA of 2.5 or higher. Students working toward a bachelor's degree or an associate's degree, or attending a trade school, are eligible for the Promise Grant. (Students who complete a program that is less than two years may qualify for a grant proportional to the length of the program.)

Promise Grant payments are made in one of two ways. A student may receive the full grant after completing two years of postsecondary education with a sufficient GPA. Alternatively, a student who meets additional eligibility requirements may receive two payments of \$1,000 each on or after October 1 of his or her first two years of postsecondary education, with the remainder to be paid upon completion of the two years.

To qualify for payments during the first two years of school, the student must demonstrate proficiency in math, science, reading, and writing on the State assessment test (the Michigan Merit Exam). In addition, beginning with students graduating in the 2010-2011 school year, the student must complete at least three credits each in math and science, as required under the Michigan Merit Standard. It has been suggested that social studies should be added to those academic requirements for students seeking up-front Promise Grant payments.

CONTENT

The bill would amend the Michigan Promise Grant Act to require a student to do the following, in addition to meeting the current criteria, in order to receive Michigan Promise Grant payments during his or her first two years of postsecondary enrollment:

- Pass the social studies component of the State assessment test.
- Beginning with students graduating in the 2010-2011 school year, complete at least three credits in social science, as required under the Michigan Merit Standard.

MCL 390.1622 & 390.1624

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 study of history, geography, civics, and other social sciences is an integral part of a well-rounded education. Students who are well-informed and have a strong understanding of history and current events will be better equipped to contribute to society and act as the next generation of civic leaders. Therefore, it is important to stress the value of social studies in the academic curriculum, and to encourage all students to engage in those courses.

The Michigan Promise Grant criteria include academic requirements in math, science, and English, but do not include a social studies requirement. That omission might lead students to conclude that social studies are not as important as the other subjects.

The bill would correct that perception, demonstrating that a commitment to social studies is a significant part of the academic curriculum.

The recently enacted statewide Michigan Merit Standard requires all public school students (beginning with those who entered 8th grade in 2006) to complete at least three credits in social science, including American history, world history, economics, and civics. (Under certain conditions, however, a student may request a personal curriculum that modifies these or other credit requirements under the Merit Standard.) The bill would provide an additional incentive for students to earn those social studies credits and demonstrate proficiency in this subject on the Michigan Merit Exam.

Legislative Analyst: Curtis Walker

FISCAL IMPACT

The bill would have no fiscal impact on State or local government.

Fiscal Analyst: Ellen Jeffries

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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.