



Senate Fiscal Agency
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BILL



ANALYSIS

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Senate Bill 1402 (Substitute S-1 as passed by the Senate)
Sponsor: Senator John J. Gleason
Committee: Education

(as enrolled)

Date Completed: 8-3-10

RATIONALE

In 2006, 33 children under the age of nine died in gun accidents or incidents involving firearms where the intent was undetermined, according to national statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Children who encounter a gun might not be aware of its dangerous potential and may accidentally shoot themselves or another person. While adults are expected to store guns safely and keep them out of the reach of children, many people believe that young people also should know the basics of gun safety so that they can respond appropriately if they see a gun. To help educate children, it has been suggested that a model gun safety program be developed for Michigan schools to adopt if they choose.

CONTENT

The bill would amend the Revised School Code to require the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) to develop or adopt and make available a model gun safety instruction program, and encourage school districts and public school academies to adopt the model program.

Specifically, the MDE would have to develop or adopt, and make available to schools, one or more model programs for gun safety instruction for elementary school pupils. The model program would have to adopt or be based on the "Eddie Eagle" GunSafe accident prevention program developed by the National Rifle Association (NRA).

The bill would encourage each school district and public school academy to adopt and

implement the model gun safety instruction program in at least 3rd grade beginning in the 2011-2012 school year.

Proposed MCL 380.1163

BACKGROUND

The Eddie Eagle GunSafe Program is an educational program for children in prekindergarten through 3rd grade, according to the National Rifle Association's website. The program includes instructional materials featuring a mascot called Eddie Eagle, and teaches children what to do if they find a gun. Over 21 million children have participated in the program since it was created in 1988, according to the NRA.

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

Childhood deaths involving firearms are rare but preventable tragedies. Making young students aware of firearm safety would help prevent accidents involving children and handguns, such as one that occurred in Flint in 2000. In that case, a six-year old boy brought a gun to Buell Elementary School and fatally shot Kayla Rolland, a fellow student. Helping students understand that guns are not toys and should not be handled unsupervised would go a long way toward preventing similar accidents in the future. Since the NRA has already developed a gun safety course, that program could be adopted or modified by the MDE at relatively

little cost. The GunSafe program focuses on a simple message for children who encounter a gun: "STOP! Don't Touch. Leave the area. Tell an adult." Teaching children respect for firearms at a young age would be the most effective way to ensure that they remember those lessons for the rest of their lives.

The bill would preserve local control by encouraging, but not requiring, school districts and public school academies to implement a gun safety program.

Legislative Analyst: Curtis Walker

FISCAL IMPACT

The bill would have minimal fiscal impact on the State. Any costs would be incurred by the Department of Education in developing or adopting and making available a model gun safety instruction program. If the Department adopted the "Eddie Eagle" program without developing its own program, costs of making that policy known to districts likely would be minimal.

Fiscal Analyst: Kathryn Summers

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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.