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Senate Bill 47 (as introduced 1-16-13)
Sponsor: Senator Darwin L. Boohar
Committee: Education

Date Completed: 4-9-13

CONTENT

The bill would amend the State School Aid Act to modify the age requirement for children to enroll in Great Start Readiness Programs.

The Act allocates funds from the State School Aid Fund for eligible intermediate districts and consortia of intermediate districts for Great Start Readiness Programs. These funds must be used to provide part-day or full-day comprehensive, free compensatory programs designed to do at least one of the following:

- Improve readiness and subsequent achievement of educationally disadvantaged children who meet the age requirement and participant eligibility and prioritization guidelines as defined by the State Board of Education.
- Provide preschool and parenting education programs similar to those under former Section 32b as in effect for 2001-2002.

(Former Section 32b pertained to the allocation of grants for Great Start communities or other community purposes as identified by the Early Childhood Investment Corporation.)

Currently, an educationally disadvantaged child must be at least four, but less than five, years of age on December 1 of the school year in which the programs are offered. The bill would refer instead to the date specified for determining eligibility to attend school under Section 1147 of the Revised School Code, beginning with the 2012-2013 school year.

A child who was not four years old on the eligibility date, but would be four years old by December 1 of a program year, would be eligible to participate if that child's parent or legal guardian gave the program written notice that he or she intended to enroll the child in the program. A program could recommend to the parent or legal guardian that the child was not ready to enroll because of age or other factors. Regardless of the recommendation, the parent or legal guardian would have sole discretion over whether to enroll that child in the program.

A child also would be eligible if he or she were five years old and any of the following applied:

- For the 2013-2014 program year, the child's birthdate would be after November 1 but on or before December 1.
- For the 2014-2015 program year, the child's birthdate would be after October 1 but on or before November 1.

-- For the 2015-2016 program year, the child's birthdate would be after September 1 but on or before October 1.

(Section 1147 of the Revised School Code establishes the minimum age for a child to enroll in kindergarten. Currently, a child must be at least five years old on December 1 of the school year in order to enroll. Public Act 198 of 2012 amended Section 1147 to phase in a requirement that a child be at least five on September 1 of the school year. That requirement will take effect beginning in the 2015-2016 school year. Before then, a child must be at least five on November 1 beginning in the 2013-2014 school year, and at least five on October 1 beginning in the 2014-2015 school year.)

MCL 388.1632d

Legislative Analyst: Glenn Steffens

FISCAL IMPACT

While the bill would reduce the number of children eligible to enroll in the Great Start Readiness Program during the phase-in period, there would be no fiscal impact on either the State or local educating agencies. The reason there would be no lapsed funds or savings is that there are more children eligible for services than funding for those children, so any slots that would be "freed up" because of the transition period would be reallocated to other children who otherwise would not be eligible for funding. There are an estimated 29,000 children eligible for services who are not served by any preschool program.

Fiscal Analyst: Kathryn Summers

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