

Legislative Analysis



PUBLIC SCHOOL KINDERGARTEN ENROLLMENT FOR CHILDREN IN PRIVATE & HOME SCHOOLS

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House Bills 4594 & 4790 as enacted
Public Acts 222 & 223 of 2015
Sponsor: Rep. Edward McBroom
House Committee: Education
Senate Committee: Education
Complete to 6-17-16

BRIEF SUMMARY: House Bill 4594 allows the parents of privately schooled and home-schooled students to also enroll their children in a public school kindergarten to take advantage of curricular opportunities. This was previously permitted for grades 1 to 12.

House Bill 4790 expands the definition of "pupil" so that privately schooled and home-schooled students enrolled in a public school kindergarten can be counted as "pupils" for the purpose of state membership aid, without seeking approval from school officials in a pupil's school district of residence. This was previously permitted for grades 1 to 12.

FISCAL IMPACT: To the extent that the bills will increase overall public school enrollments, they could create additional costs for both the state and local school districts. Currently there are approximately 11,400 nonpublic shared-time pupils counted in membership in grades 1-12, which at the FY 2015-16 average foundation allowance of approximately \$7,565, costs about \$86.2 million. An exact breakout of shared-time pupils by grade level is not currently available, but if the bills increase the number of shared-time pupils by the current average per grade, it would increase pupils by about 950 at an additional annual cost of \$7.2 million. However, if the marginal cost of educating an additional student is lower than the increased funding received by a school district, the school district may benefit.

THE APPARENT PROBLEM:

Prior to enactment of these bills, the parents of students who were enrolled in grades 1 to 12 in a non-public school, or who were being home-schooled, could also enroll their students in a local public school district, public charter school, or public intermediate school district for any curricular offering, with the State School Aid Fund providing funding for such a student.

Statewide, many school districts open their course offerings to home-schooled and privately schooled students. The arrangements are voluntary and locally negotiated, so contracts vary from district to district. For example, access to vaunted music programs are sought in some districts, while others offer foreign languages. Generally students attend the public school for a short period during the day, transported by their parents. However, in some districts, public school teachers travel to private schools to teach.

House Bill 4594 allows an expansion of shared public school programs, so they may begin in kindergarten, rather than waiting until first grade. House Bill 4790 ensures public funding for these curricular arrangements that will serve home-schooled or privately schooled kindergartners. Proponents of the bills say public school programs in the earliest elementary school grade have increased in popularity since the onset of the full-day kindergarten.

THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:

House Bill 4594 amended the School Aid Act (at MCL 388.1766b) to allow the parents of privately-schooled and home-schooled students to also enroll their children in a public school kindergarten to take advantage of curricular opportunities. Previously, this option applies only to grades 1-12.

House Bill 4970 amended the State School Aid Act (at MCL 388.1606) to change the definition of "pupil" so that privately schooled and home-schooled students enrolled in a public school kindergarten could be counted as "pupils" for the purpose of membership aid, without seeking approval from school officials in a pupil's school district of residence.

The term "pupil" is defined to mean a person in membership in a public school. The law specifies that a school district must have the approval of a pupil's district of residence to count the pupil in its membership. However, the law also exceptions to that requirement, one of which is that approval by the pupil's district of residence is not required for "a nonpublic part-time pupil enrolled in grades 1 to 12 in accordance with Section 166b." House Bill 4970 extends this exception to cover part-time pupils enrolled in kindergarten.

ARGUMENTS:

For:

Proponents of the bills note that they extend learning opportunities to home-schooled and private school *kindergartners*—enhancing their curricular offerings one year earlier than is now allowed under the law. They say public school programs in the earliest elementary school grade have increased in popularity since the onset of the full-day kindergarten.

Proponents say forging social connections from an early age with fellow students in public schools is an advantage, because most privately schooled students, and many home-schooled students complete their final years of schooling in a public school system. Supporters of the legislation also say that locally designed shared-time agreements build communities in positive ways, encouraging productive partnerships among community stakeholders.

Legislative Analysts: J. Hunault
Chris Couch

Fiscal Analysts: Bethany Wicksall
Samuel Christensen

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