

Legislative Analysis



SOCIAL MEDIA POLICIES BETWEEN STUDENTS AND SCHOOL PERSONNEL

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<http://www.house.mi.gov/hfa>

House Bill 4791 (proposed substitute H-2)
Sponsor: Rep. Adam F. Zemke
Committee: Education
Complete to 2-17-16

Analysis available at
<http://www.legislature.mi.gov>

SUMMARY:

House Bill 4791 would amend the Revised School Code by adding a section requiring that schools adopt and implement a policy regulating social media interactions between students and school personnel no later than the beginning of the 2017-2018 school year. That policy must outline acceptable online, digital, and social media-based communication between pupils and school personnel, and must be posted on the school website.

This requirement would apply to school districts, intermediate school districts (ISDs), and public school academies (charter schools). In developing these policies, a school board or board of directors would consult with teachers and principals and notify them in writing of the policy once it is adopted and posted.

The bill encourages the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) to create and provide model policies as guidance for districts in developing their own policies. Further, the MDE is encouraged to consult local districts and other states' policies in developing these model policies, and to review and, if necessary, update the policies annually.

BACKGROUND

This bill was precipitated by recent news of inappropriate relationships between students and teachers. The following story indicates that only about half of schools in metro Detroit have policies specifically governing staff-student interaction on social media.

<http://www.wxyz.com/news/monday-at-11-teachers-students-sex-social-media>

States such as New Jersey have passed legislation requiring school districts to adopt a written policy concerning electronic communications between school employees and students, which would include social media. This act was approved in 2014.

<https://legiscan.com/NJ/text/S441/2014>

Please see the following website for more information on crafting school social media policies: <https://www.edutopia.org/pdfs/edutopia-anderson-social-media-guidelines.pdf>

FISCAL IMPACT:

House Bill 4791 would have no impact on the State and a minimal, if any, impact on school districts, public school academies, and intermediate school districts. The bills could create

additional administrative costs by requiring districts, public school academies, and intermediate districts to adopt and implement a policy regulating social media interactions between pupils and school personnel; however, these costs would likely be defrayed through redirection of existing staff time, especially since this will generally require a one-time use of staff time.

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