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BILL



ANALYSIS

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House Bill 4136 (as passed by the House)
Sponsor: Representative Peter J. Lucido
House Committee: Education
Senate Committee: Education

Date Completed: 11-29-16

CONTENT

The bill would amend the Revised School Code to do the following:

- Specify that, beginning in the 2016-2017 school year, a pupil could not be awarded credit for completing a high school civics course unless he or she passed a test that consisted of questions identical to some or all of those on the civics portion of the United States naturalization test.**
- Allow a high school's governing board to determine the method and manner in which to administer the test.**
- Require a high school's governing board to allow a pupil who failed the test to retake it until he or she earned a passing score.**

Under the Code, all public and nonpublic schools must provide regular courses of instruction in the Constitution of the United States and the Michigan Constitution. In addition, a high school must require a one-semester course in civics in which students are taught the form and functions of the Federal, state, and local governments, and the rights and responsibilities of citizens.

Under the bill, beginning in the 2016-2017 school year, a pupil could not be awarded credit for successfully completing a high school civics course unless he or she earned a passing score on a test that consisted solely of questions that were identical to some or all of the questions on the civics portion of the naturalization test used by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services. If a pupil met this requirement, his or her high school would have to document on the pupil's transcript that he or she had passed that test.

A high school's governing board could determine the method and manner in which to administer the test and how many questions, and which questions, from the civics portion of the naturalization test would be included on the high school's test. The governing board would have to allow a pupil who did not earn a passing score on the test to retake it until he or she earned a passing score. "Passing score" would mean correctly answering at least 60% of the questions included on the test.

Under the Code, a diploma may not be issued to a student who has not successfully completed the civics course. Under the bill, successful completion of the course would include meeting the proposed requirements.

MCL 380.1166

Legislative Analyst: Jeff Mann

FISCAL IMPACT

The bill would have no impact on the Department of Education and an indeterminate cost to most local high schools. The Department would not be charged with reviewing the proposed civics test requirement and therefore would not incur any costs as a result of this requirement.

Local school boards, however, would have to ensure that high schools properly incorporated the naturalization exam in the civics class curriculum and ensure that all students passed the test in order to receive their diploma. It is unknown how many high schools currently require the naturalization exam as part of completing the civics course, but it is likely that most schools would need to modify their course curriculum, which would result in some additional costs.

The bill also would result in additional costs to schools for those students who did not pass the exam the first time and had to retake it or would require additional education in order to meet completion. These costs per high school could be significant. According to the results of the most recent Michigan Merit Exam, just 43% of 11th graders were proficient in social studies, and 11.25% were not proficient. Since civics education is highly correlated to overall social studies performance, this could indicate the number of students who might need to retake the exam to complete the civics course requirement. Using the results for not proficient (which could correlate to the number of students who would score less than 60% on the naturalization exam and fail to pass), this could mean that at least 11,000 students across the State would need to retake the naturalization exam or require additional education each year. If this happened to be the number of students who did not pass the civics exam on the first attempt, the costs to districts across the State would be substantial.

Fiscal Analyst: Cory Savino

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