

Legislative Analysis



INTERIM TEACHING CERTIFICATE

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Senate Bill 727 (H-2) as reported from House committee

Sponsor: Sen. Phil Pavlov

House Committee: Education Reform

Senate Committee: Education

Complete to 2-27-18

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

(Enacted as Public Act 106 of 2018)

BRIEF SUMMARY: Senate Bill 727 would amend the Revised School Code to remove the requirement that teachers pass the basic skills examination (currently the SAT, as described in **Background**, below) before receiving an interim teaching certificate. Additionally, the law currently requires a candidate with a bachelor's, master's, doctorate, or professional degree to have a 3.0 GPA on a 4.0 scale (or the equivalent). The bill would revise that requirement so that the participants in the alternative teaching program in which the candidate participates must have a cohort grade point average of at least 3.0 on a 4.0 scale.

FISCAL IMPACT: The bill would have no fiscal impact for the state or school districts, intermediate school districts (ISDs), or public school academies (PSAs).

THE APPARENT PROBLEM:

According to the bill sponsor, the bill is intended to cater to the realities of nontraditional students in the education field. Many of the individuals participating in the alternative teaching certificate process switch to the field from other careers, and there was concern that requiring a 3.0 GPA or passage of the SAT could keep otherwise qualified and dedicated teachers from entering the field.

THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:

Generally, a person earns a standard teaching certificate upon completion of an approved teacher preparation program, composed of course work and student teaching, and governed by Section 1531 of the Code.

The bill would amend the alternative teaching certificate process for earning an interim teaching certificate (ITC) under Section 1531i of the Code. (An ITC entitles the holder to teach full-time in a Michigan school as the teacher of record. It is a 5-year certificate, and in order to maintain certification, an individual must continue to be enrolled in the alternative route preparation program.)

Currently, in order to earn the interim certificate, a person must do all of the following:

- Participate in an approved alternative teaching program that:
 - Provides intensive training that is equivalent to 12 college credit hours and includes specified training.
 - Has, or is modeled after a program with, a proven record of producing successful teachers in one or more states.
 - Only accepts participants with a bachelor's degree or above with a GPA of at least 3.0 on a 4.0 scale.

- Hold a bachelor's degree or above with a GPA of at least 3.0 on a 4.0 scale.
- Pass the basic skills examination (and appropriate available subject area examination for each subject area in which he or she applies to be certified).

The bill would remove the requirement that the program produce successful teachers in other states. It would also remove the requirement that the program only accept students with a 3.0 GPA, as well as the requirement that the applicant himself or herself have a 3.0, and replace those with a requirement that the program's participants have a *cohort* GPA of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale. (If a participant has more than one qualifying degree, the one in which he or she has earned the highest GPA would count toward the cohort GPA.)

Cohort, as defined in the bill, would mean all of the individuals enrolled in an alternative teaching program approved by the superintendent of public instruction for the three years immediately preceding the granting of an interim teaching certificate under this section to an individual enrolled in the program.

Finally, the bill would remove the requirement that the applicant have passed the basic skills examination.

MCL 380.1531i

HOUSE COMMITTEE ACTION:

The House Education Reform Committee adopted an H-2 substitute, which would define "cohort" and provide that, if a member of the cohort had multiple qualifying degrees, the one used in determining the average GPA for the cohort would be the one in which he or she had the highest GPA.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Beginning October 1, 2017, according to the Michigan Department of Education (MDE), candidates seeking initial teacher certification would only be able to take the SAT as the basic skills examination (tests taken before that date that qualified at the time they were taken may also be honored).¹

More information about the alternative route to Michigan certification or endorsement is available here:

http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Alternative_Routes_to_Certification_and_Endorsement_597547_7.PDF

There are currently six alternate route providers offering Michigan interim certification: Davenport University, Schoolcraft College, The New Teacher Project, Michigan Teachers of Tomorrow, University of Michigan M-ARC (Michigan Alternative Route to Certification), and University of Michigan-Flint. Information about the programs offered by each provider is available here: <https://mdoe.state.mi.us/moeecs/PublicProPrepOrganizations.aspx>

¹ MDE memo about the basic skills examination:

http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Testing_Guidance_601819_7.PDF

ARGUMENTS:

For:

Proponents argued that the goal of alternative teaching certification should be to make it “easier to get in and harder to get out.” In other words, individuals interesting in becoming teachers should have every opportunity to prove their competence and dedication and not be held back by a 2.95 GPA earned 15 to 20 years before. Adopting a cohort GPA requirement rather than an individual GPA requirement would allow those nominally below the threshold the opportunity to prove their mettle, they say, and still ensure that the group as a whole is held to certain basic standards.

Likewise, supporters argue that passage of the SAT is a poor indicator of competence. The SAT is best suited to assess skills when entering college, they say; those participating in the alternative route certification already have at least a bachelor’s degree, and would potentially be taking the SAT years or even decades after receiving their degrees. In fact, the Michigan Department of Education supports removal of the basic skills examination at all levels, stating that there is no indication that it results in a better teacher.

Against:

Critics argue that the bill would remove two of the three benchmarks individuals must meet to receive an alternate certification. Currently, each individual must meet minimum GPA requirements, pass the SAT, and pass the subject-area test for the grade level and content area he or she wishes to teach. Opponents wonder if the subject-area test alone is a sufficient barrier to keep unqualified individuals out of classrooms.

POSITIONS:

A representative of the Michigan Teachers of Tomorrow testified in support of the bill. (2-15-18)

The following organizations support the bill:

- Michigan Department of Education (2-15-18)
- Great Lakes Education Project (2-15-18)
- Michigan Association of Public School Academies (2-15-18)
- Michigan Elementary and Middle Schools Principals Association (2-22-18)

A representative of Eastern Michigan University and the Michigan Association of Colleges for Teacher Education testified in opposition to the bill. (2-15-18)

The Michigan Education Association opposes the bill. (2-15-18)

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■ This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan House Fiscal Agency staff for use by House members in their deliberations, and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.