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COLLEGE LEVEL EQUIVALENT COURSES

House Bills 4640 and 4641 (Substitutes H-1) First Analysis (5-10-95)

Sponsor: Rep. Jessie Dalman
Committee: Higher Education

THE APPARENT PROBLEM:

The public school system often does not provide the type of learning atmosphere necessary to challenge the above average student. Although there are currently options available to some high school students to participate in more challenging classes, these opportunities are limited. Some argue that access to and funding for such programs needs to be increased in order to provide those students who have the desire and the capacity to excel with the opportunity to do so. Furthermore, under the current system many students are unaware of which courses and tests could be taken to provide college level credit.

Many Michigan schools offer college level equivalent courses as part of their curriculum. However, due to the cost, many students who attend these courses do not take the final examination which would allow the course to be treated as college credit. Further, there is no current method to either provide incentives or acknowledgement to teachers or schools whose students excel. The current law regarding college level equivalent courses fails to provide adequate incentives to encourage teachers or schools to place an emphasis on preparing and encouraging students to take such courses.

THE CONTENT OF THE BILLS:

The bills would provide for the provision of college level equivalent courses for high school students, and provide funding. The bills are tie-barred to each other and to House Bills 4642-4644, which would create a Post Secondary Enrollment Options Act and make complementary amendments to the School Code and the State School Aid Act.

House Bill 4640 would amend the School Code (MCL 380.3 et al.) to provide students with access to high school courses that are taught at a

postsecondary instruction level. The bill would add a new Part 14A to the code to establish "college level equivalent courses and credits," effective July 1, 1995. The bill would also establish a College Level Equivalent Incentive Fund; an incentive award program to recognize pupils, teachers, and schools that successfully achieved educational goals by implementing college level equivalent courses; and would require that funds appropriated for professional development and education be allocated to train teachers for college level equivalent courses. The Department of Education could promulgate rules to implement the provisions of Part 14A. The provisions of Part 14A would be repealed effective June 30, 2001. In addition, current provisions under the act establishing a Michigan information network would be replaced with provisions specifying that the network also be used to promote delivery of college level equivalent courses.

College Level Equivalent Courses (CLECs). A CLEC would be defined under the bill to mean a course offered in high school, for which a pupil receives high school credit, that is taught at a postsecondary instruction level and is designed to prepare a pupil for a college level equivalent credit examination in a particular subject area. The board of each school district or public school academy would be required to:

****Pay pupils' CLEC examination fees from the foundation allowance it received for each pupil under the provisions of the School Aid Act. However, the school would not have to pay the fee more than once for each exam. (An intermediate school district would be subject to this provision for students for whom it received a foundation allowance.)**

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**Ensure that each pupil in Grade 8 or higher was provided with both general information about CLECs, and with specific information about appropriate courses for that pupil.

** Provide CLECs either directly, through an intermediate school district program, or by agreement in a consortium or cooperative program.

CLEC Directory. The state board would be required to publish a CLEC directory annually, and to distribute it to school districts and public school academies, and, upon request, to nonpublic high schools. The directory would list postsecondary Michigan institutions that granted college level equivalent credit, describe each institution's college level equivalent credit policy, detail the specific courses and number of credits for which college level equivalent credit could be granted, and the exam and scores that would be required to qualify for college level equivalent credit for each course. The state board would not include information about a particular postsecondary institution in the directory unless the information were reviewed by the institution before publication and its accuracy verified in writing.

Incentive Awards. Beginning in 1996, each school district, public school academy, intermediate school district, consortium, or cooperative program could apply for an incentive award to recognize and reward pupils, teachers, and schools that demonstrated success in achieving the state's educational goals through successful implementation of college level equivalent courses. The deadline for applications would be July 15th of each year. Payments would be disbursed, as directed by the department, from the proposed College Level Equivalent Incentive Fund (see below), and from appropriations to the fund specified under the provisions of House Bill 4641. Under House Bill 4640, the following provisions would apply to the program:

**Incentive awards of \$50 each would be paid for each score on a CLEC exam that was at, or above, the minimum score recommended by the Testing Service for College Credit. The award would be paid to the teacher of the CLEC course, and to the high school building or program, or public school academy in which the pupil was enrolled, for each score achieved during the preceding 12-month period.

**An incentive award payment made to a high school building in a school district would be used for academic purposes only, and priority would be given to uses that would enhance instruction in the academic core curriculum. Input from the team created to develop the school improvement plan for the high school would be obtained before a decision was made on how to use the money.

**If the appropriation specified under the provisions of House Bill 4641 was insufficient to fully fund all incentive award payments, then payment amounts would be prorated accordingly. If the appropriation exceeded the amount needed to fully fund all award payments, then the excess would be deposited in the College Level Equivalent Incentive Fund.

College Level Equivalent Incentive Fund. The fund would be administered by the department, and used to fund college level equivalent incentive awards. Money in the fund at the end of each state fiscal year would be carried over to the next state fiscal year and would not lapse to the general fund.

Accreditation. The bill would add to current accreditation requirements to specify that, beginning in the 1996-97 school year, a high school's annual educational report would have to include the following:

- a) The number and percentage of pupils enrolled in one or more postsecondary courses, under the provisions of the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Act (proposed in House Bill 4643), during the immediately preceding school year.
- b) The number of college level equivalent courses offered to pupils enrolled in the school, in the school district, and in consortia or cooperative programs available to pupils of the school district.
- c) The number and percentage of pupils enrolled in at least one college level equivalent course during the immediately preceding school year, desegregated by grade level; and the number and percentage of these pupils who took a CLEC exam, and, of these, the number and percentage who achieved a score on a CLEC exam at or above the level recommended by the Testing Service for College Credit.

In addition, the Department of Education would have to prepare and submit an annual report to the legislature, using the information submitted, aggregated for statewide and intermediate school district totals.

Student Portfolios. Currently, a school district must maintain a student portfolio for each pupil, containing, among other items, students' academic transcripts. The bill would require, in addition, that a school district provide and maintain all correspondence and other academic records relating to the pupil's enrollment in a postsecondary course under the provisions of the Postsecondary Enrollment Options Act, or the student's participation in a CLEC.

Michigan Information Network. Currently, the act requires that the DMB prepare a plan to establish a Michigan information network, effective June 30, 1995. House Bill 4640 would replace this provision with one that would require, in addition, that the plan include specific recommendations for using the network to promote delivery of CLECs. Under the bill, the DMB would have to prepare a state plan for a Michigan Information Network by June 30, 1995. The network would link -- by a system such as fiber optic or coaxial cable -- each local and intermediate school district, community college, independent nonprofit college or university in the state, and each state public university and local or regional library, on an equal basis, to provide a world-class statewide interactive video and data access and exchange system.

House Bill 4641 would add a section to the State School Aid Act (MCL 388.1695) to allocate \$1.1 million from the School Aid Fund for the purpose of making the CLEC incentive award payments outlined above. The bill would state that it was the intent of the legislature that as money was contributed to and deposited in the College Level Equivalent Incentive Fund, money would be appropriated from that fund for the purpose making the CLEC incentive award payments outlined above, rather than from funds allocated for foundation grants.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:

According to the House Fiscal Agency, the bills would increase state and local costs. Requiring incentive payments for teachers and schools would cost about \$1.1 million, while requiring an annual

report on college course equivalencies for advanced placement tests would cost about \$25,000. However, this amount would be reduced by the amounts donated to the College Level Equivalent Incentive Fund. (5-8-95)

ARGUMENTS:

For:

The bills would provide an incentive for students to take, teachers to teach, and schools to provide college level equivalent courses. The bills would also require that students be provided with information regarding the availability of CLECs in order to help them make informed decisions about taking particular courses. Offering college level courses to secondary level students, whose credits will be transferable to colleges or universities, would help to provide a more seamless transition between high school and college and give those students a head start at the next level of education. Currently, there are no incentives to encourage teachers or schools to either provide or promote college level equivalent courses. High school students who have the capacity to accept and meet the challenges inherent in attending and passing college level courses are not generally made aware of any opportunity they might have to attend college level courses. A high school student who possesses the ability to take such a course should not be denied access merely because his or her peers are not yet ready to do so. Providing schools and teachers with awards for each pupil who successfully completes a college level course will encourage the success of both the students and the programs. In addition, better information on and access to such courses will increase educational opportunities for students. Further, if enough students take advantage of these opportunities it might reduce the number of students seeking enrollment in postsecondary courses through the school district.

Against:

The bills would create a new categorical in the School Aid Act, and add to the School Code, at a time when the legislature has been sharply reducing the number of categoricals in order to enhance the foundation grant, and at a time when the School Code is being revisited in hopes of eliminating many state programmatic requirements. Furthermore, the incentive payments and examination fees would be allocated from the already stressed School Aid Fund, reducing the amounts which could be spent on general operations for the district. And, since

House Bill 4641 would appropriate funds from the School Aid Fund the bills should be reviewed by the Appropriations Committee.

Response:

The bill specifies that it the legislature's intent that this program be supported by donations first, then by appropriations, in an attempt to limit erosion of the School Aid Fund.

Against:

The bills would require that school funds be used to pay for any student to take an advanced placement exam, regardless of the ability of that student's family to afford the cost of such an examination. Considering the already diminished level of school funding, the offer to pay a student's exam fees should be limited to those students who would not otherwise be able to take the exam.

Against:

The bills represent be an inappropriate use of school funds. Public school funds would be used to support a specific company, the College Board, which writes and administers the Advanced Placement tests. As the only company providing the examinations, the College Board would benefit significantly through the creation of a system where public monies are used to pay for their company's examinations.

Against:

Teachers are already amply paid and as a result are expected to teach the students to the best of their abilities. Giving teachers a monetary bonus for student success seems to go against such expectations, implying that teachers are not giving their best effort and need further compensation to do so.

Response:

College level equivalent courses are not an expected part of a high school teacher's curriculum. Such courses are very difficult and demanding both for the students and the teachers. The teacher usually has to spend far more time preparing for the class and in instructing and tutoring the students than he or she would for typical high school courses. A college level equivalent course is not a course that a high school teacher would normally be expected to teach; the class, as preparation for taking the advanced placement test to provide college credit, must be demanding to provide the students with knowledge sufficient to pass the test. A teacher who takes it upon him- or herself to make the extra

commitment to his or her students deserves such an award.

POSITIONS:

The State Board of Education supports the bills. (5-9-95)

The Michigan Association of Nonpublic Schools supports the bills, and would support them even more strongly if nonpublic school students were included. (5-5-95)

The Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Michigan supports the bills. (5-5-95)

The Michigan Association of Secondary School Principals cautiously supports the bills. (5-9-95)

The College Board, Midwestern Office, supports the bills. (5-5-95)

The Michigan Education Association supports the bills, but is concerned about the effect the cost of these programs would have on the K-12 foundation grant. (5-10-95)

The Presidents Council, State Universities of Michigan, supports the bills. (5-9-95)

The Michigan Association of School Administrators opposes the bills. (5-5-95)

The Michigan Congress of Parents and Teachers opposes the bills. (5-9-95)

The Michigan Association of School Boards opposes the bills. (5-5-95)