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COMMUNITY COLLEGES: ANNEXATION

House Bill 4939 (Substitute H-1) First Analysis (7-1-97)

Sponsor: Rep. David Anthony
Committee: Colleges and Universities

THE APPARENT PROBLEM:

Currently, under the Community College Act of 1966, a community college district may, by following the procedures outlined in the act, annex any contiguous counties or townships into the community college district. Annexed counties and/or townships become part of the district and are eligible to receive the same services from the community college as are provided to the district and are subject to any taxes for principal and interest of outstanding bonded indebtedness of the community college district.

The restrictions preventing non-adjacent counties or townships from becoming part of a community college's district have, in some instances, prevented reasonable annexations, particularly for some counties in the Upper Peninsula. In particular, Dickinson County has been hoping to become part of Delta County's Bay De Noc Community College district. However, because the two counties are separated by a small portion of Menominee County, Dickinson County is prevented from joining the district. In addition, Alpena Community College has offered classes at Wurtsmith Air Force Base for more than 20 years, but the district also has been barred from annexing the base because it is located in a non-contiguous county. Legislation has been introduced to grant limited exceptions to the rule barring non-contiguous annexation for the Upper Peninsula and for the Alpena Community College/Wurtsmith Air Force Base situation.

THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:

House Bill 4939 would allow a community college district located in the Upper Peninsula to annex a non-contiguous county or township (one that does not border directly on the community college district). Furthermore, a community college district that had been offering classes at a federal military installation located in a non-contiguous county for at least 20 years would be allowed to annex that non-contiguous county or that portion of the

county that was not already part of another community college district.

MCL 389.21

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:

According to the House Fiscal Agency, the bill could reduce state costs if state aid payments to the college are lowered due to increased property tax revenues for colleges resulting from annexation. Local costs incurred by the colleges could increase if there are costs associated with long-distance operations, but local revenues could possibly rise as a result of the larger property tax base if annexation occurs. (6-26-97)

ARGUMENTS:

For:

Due to the distances between communities in the Upper Peninsula, the number of community college options is limited, and the closest local colleges are located more than an hour's drive away from many communities. For the past five years, the Dickinson County Task Force for Higher Learning has been working to help the county become part of Delta County's Bay De Noc Community College district. Unfortunately, these attempts have been thwarted by the current law. Allowing the county to be annexed by the district will ensure that residents of Dickinson County will receive the same tuition rates and other benefits of Bay De Noc Community College as residents of Delta County.

The other community college effected by the bill would be Alpena Community College, which has had an ongoing program with Wurtsmith Air Force Base for more than 20 years. The bill will provide the air force base and the portions of its county that are not currently within another community college district the opportunity to join Alpena Community College's district.

It should be noted that the bill's provisions do not in any way require the eligible counties or townships to join the district if they do not wish to. Annexation by a community college district must be approved by a majority vote by the affected community.

Against:

Why should the privilege of joining a non-contiguous community college district be restricted only to the Upper Peninsula? Many communities in the upper portion of the Lower Peninsula are also separated by long distances. Why shouldn't they also be allowed to be annexed to non-contiguous community districts?

POSITIONS:

The Michigan Community College Association supports the bill. (6-27-97)

Analyst: W. Flory

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