

# Legislative Analysis

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## DELAY READING REQUIREMENT

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**Senate Bill 70 (Substitute H-1)**

**Sponsor: Sen. Nancy Cassis**

**House Committee: Education**

**Senate Committee: Education**

### Revised First Analysis (6-20-07)

**BRIEF SUMMARY:** The requirement that a teacher must receive an additional three credits of reading instruction within the first six years of teaching, or as a part of teacher preparation training, in order to renew a provisional teaching certificate, or advance to a professional teaching certificate, would be delayed until July 1, 2009. The requirement is currently scheduled to take effect on July 1, 2007.

**FISCAL IMPACT:** The bill would have no fiscal impact.

### THE APPARENT PROBLEM:

Public Act 110 of 2006 amended the Revised School Code to require a teacher to receive reading instruction within the first six years of teaching in order to qualify for a renewal of a provisional teaching certificate or advancement to a professional teaching certificate. The three-credit course requirement is scheduled to take effect on July 1, 2007.

As of April 2007, a few months before the bill was scheduled to go into effect, the Michigan Department of Education had approved 18 university-based courses, and approval of an additional 22 courses was pending. However, some universities reportedly will not have the required course in place by the July 1, 2007 deadline.

It has been suggested that the implementation of the new reading course requirement be delayed, in order to give universities additional time to develop the course. Legislation has been introduced to set the deadline ahead two years—to July 1, 2009—and also to specify that prospective teachers may complete the course as part of their teacher education program.

### THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:

Public Act 118 of 2006 (Senate Bill 327) amended the Revised School Code to require a teacher to receive reading instruction within the first six years of teaching in order to renew a provisional teaching certificate or advance to a professional teaching certificate. The requirement is scheduled to take effect on July 1, 2007. Senate Bill 70 would delay the requirement until July 1, 2009. The bill also would allow an individual to complete the required course as part of teacher preparation training or during the first six years of teaching.

[The specific requirement is that a teacher successfully complete at least a three-credit course in the diagnosis and remediation of reading disabilities and differentiated instruction. The course is to include English language learning screening, visually and auditory discrimination tools, language expression and processing screening, phonemics, phonics, vocabulary, fluency comprehension, spelling and writing assessment tools, and instructional strategies.]

MCL 380.1531

***HOUSE COMMITTEE ACTION:***

The members of the House Education Committee adopted one amendment to the Senate-passed version of the bill. That amendment would extend the implementation date from July 1, 2008 to July 1, 2009.

***ARGUMENTS:***

***For:***

In the classroom, teachers—new teachers in particular—may have difficulty identifying the specific barriers that prevent a student from reading at grade level. During the crucial years between kindergarten and third grade, it is important to help children develop solid reading skills that will serve as the foundation for the rest of their education. Without proper training, a teacher may recommend that a student be placed into special education classes, or diagnose the child with a learning disability, when the real issue may be a visual, hearing, or motor disability. In addition, emotional disturbances or social conditions such as poverty or difficulties at home can affect a child's performance in school.

Proponents of this legislation argue that the reading training course required under the Revised School Code will enable teachers to identify barriers to learning and help students to work past them, providing a more effective education to students at this crucial age and alleviating strain on special education programs.

According to committee testimony, some universities have not completed development of the required reading course. To enable them to properly develop and implement the reading course requirement, the bill would postpone the deadline two years, until July 1, 2009.

***For:***

The bill would allow prospective teachers to take the required reading course as part of their teacher education program, instead of only during the first six years of classroom teaching. When the reading course requirement was enacted in 2006, some expressed concern that if the course were incorporated into the teacher education curriculum, it could lengthen the time needed to complete the program, or discourage prospective teachers from entering the field. Some students, however, might prefer to take the course while they are still in school, while others would rather complete the teacher education

program and take the course later during the summer, or in the evening or on weekends. The bill would give an individual the flexibility to decide the best time to take the course, based on his or her schedule and other considerations.

***POSITIONS:***

The American Federation of Teachers supports the bill. (6-19-07)

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