

# Legislative Analysis



## CORRECTIONS OFFICERS: NEW EMPLOYEE TRAINING IN COLLEGES AND COMMUNITY COLLEGES

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**House Bill 5422 (reported without amendment)**

**Sponsor: Rep. Joe Haveman**

**Committee: Education**

### First Analysis (6-4-12)

**BRIEF SUMMARY:** The bill would allow new employee training for corrections officers to be provided by a college or a community college, beginning August 1, 2012.

**FISCAL IMPACT:** A fiscal analysis is in process.

### THE APPARENT PROBLEM:

In 1982, the legislature passed Public Act 415, entitled the Michigan Correctional Officers' Training Act. The act was spurred by three prison disturbances over Memorial Day weekend in May 1981--at Jackson, Ionia, and Marquette--that caused widespread property damage and many injuries, but no loss of life. In response, the Michigan Legislature conducted an extensive investigation, and identified the lack of education and training for line-staff as factors contributing to the prison inmates' unrest. Since enactment of the now 30-year old law, Michigan has been recognized as a national leader in the education and training of corrections officers.

Section 3 of Public Act 415 of 1982 creates an eight-member Michigan Correctional Officers' Training Council, appointed by the Governor. The Council is charged with establishing standards regarding training and education.

Currently, Michigan corrections officers must be at least 18-years old and United States citizens. Candidates cannot have any felony convictions, and they must be in good health. Further, Michigan corrections officers must earn a high school diploma (or an equivalent certificate), and they must also complete 15 semesters of college credit hours in psychology, criminal justice, family relations or sociology. Because corrections officers are civil servants, all must complete a civil service application, take a drug test, and undergo a criminal history background check. In addition, each candidate must pass the Corrections Officer Exam (scheduled by the Department of Corrections).

Finally, all corrections officer-trainees must complete on-the-job training. Once hired, they attend the training academy to complete 320 hours of academic coursework and testing, as well as physical training to gain self-defense and firearm proficiency skills. For further information, see **Background Information** below.

According to committee testimony, about 400 corrections officers are trained each year at the training academy, at a cost of about \$4.5 million. Year-round training opportunities at the academy are necessary, because 30 to 40 veteran correction officers retire each

month, and most must be replaced. Currently the training academy is unable to keep up with the training demand.

Legislation has been introduced to allow community colleges (in addition to the training academy) to offer the coursework that fulfills a correction officer's 320-hour new-employee training requirement.

### ***THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:***

House Bill 5422 would amend the Correctional Officers' Training Act to allow new employee training for corrections officers to be provided by a college or a community college, beginning August 1, 2012. A more detailed description of the bill follows.

Now under the law, state correctional officers can be certified by the Michigan Commission on Corrections if the officers meet the following requirements:

- Have a high school diploma (or attain a passing score on the GED test).
- Successfully complete one of the following: (1) *a vocational certificate* or (2) *equivalent coursework* (earned from an accredited postsecondary educational institution after completing 15 semester credit hours or 23 term credit hours), or (3) *a degree from an accredited school in a major discipline of study relevant to the position* (as determined by the Correctional Officers' Training Council\*).
- Complete at least a two-month paid internship in a correctional facility.
- Complete at least 320 hours of new employee training, as determined by the council, at the central training academy.
- Fulfill other minimum standards and requirements set by the council and approved by the department.

House Bill 5422 would retain all of these provisions, and also provide that the 320 hours of new employee training could be completed either at the central training academy, *or at a college or community college*.

Under the bill, beginning August 1, 2012, (and as often as necessary thereafter), the council would be required to develop minimum standards and requirements for a certification program for new employee training to be offered by community colleges and colleges.

The certification standards would have to, at a minimum, address the qualifications for instructors at approved schools; the facilities and equipment required at those schools; and program content.

The bill specifies that only council-approved community colleges or colleges could provide training or a certificate of completion for new employee training. Further, the council would be required to designate the form for a certificate of completion for new employee training at community colleges or colleges.

Finally, the bill also specifies that the council could provide for the decertification of programs that failed to meet its standards.

NOTE: (\*) The Correctional Officers' Training Council consists of eight members appointed by the Governor, with one member to represent state corrections officers; one member representing the DOC; one member representing the department of Technology, Management and Budget; one member representing the state personnel director; two members representing the public at large; and two members representing the academic community, at least one of whom must represent Michigan community colleges.

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**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

For further information on the employment as a corrections officer, see:  
[http://www.michigan.gov/documents/corrections/Hire\\_Process\\_\\_1-08\\_222140\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/corrections/Hire_Process__1-08_222140_7.pdf)

**ARGUMENTS:**

**For:**

This bill is needed to help the Department of Corrections replace its retiring personnel in Michigan prisons with fully trained, new corrections officers. According to committee testimony, between 360 and 480 veteran corrections officers are retiring each year. These retirees must be replaced with well-trained employees--all of whom now complete 320-hours of new employee training at the training academy. A spokesman from the department says the training academy is unable to keep up with the demand for classes. This will provide that the 320 hours of new employee training could be completed either at the central training academy, or at a college or community college.

To ensure an adequate program that both informs and protects new corrections officers, the bill requires the Correctional Officers' Training Council to develop standards and requirements for the college-based new employee certification program, beginning August 1, 2012. Those certification standards would have to, at a minimum, address the qualifications for instructors at approved schools; the facilities and equipment required at those schools; and program content. And, only council-approved community colleges or colleges could provide training or a certificate of completion for new employee training.

**POSITIONS:**

The Michigan Community College Association supports the bill. (5-30-12)

Jackson Community College supports the bill. (5-30-12)

The Michigan Department of Corrections supports the bill. (5-30-12)

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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.