

Legislative Analysis



INTERIM TEACHING CERTIFICATE

Phone: (517) 373-8080
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Senate Bill 657 (H-2) as referred to second House committee

Sponsor: Sen. Lana Theis

1st House Committee: Education

2nd House Committee: Ways and Means

Senate Committee: Education and Career Readiness

Complete to 7-17-20

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

BRIEF SUMMARY: Senate Bill 657 would amend the Revised School Code to provide for an interim teaching certificate (ITC) via an alternate route for those seeking to teach special education. An ITC entitles the holder to teach full-time in a Michigan school as the teacher of record. It is a nonrenewable five-year certificate.¹ The bill would stipulate that this alternative route would sunset (or expire) seven years after the bill took effect. However, an ITC granted before the sunset would remain valid until its normal expiration date.

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 ITC under section 1531i of the code. The bill would require that the process meet all requirements of the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), in addition to its current required compliance with the No Child Left Behind Act.

FISCAL IMPACT: The bill would increase costs for the state and for local school districts, intermediate school districts (ISDs), and public school academies (PSAs). It would also have a minimal fiscal impact on the selected public research university. (See **Fiscal Information**, below, for further discussion.)

THE APPARENT PROBLEM:

According to a February 2019 Citizens Research Council of Michigan (CRC) memo, enrollment in teacher preparation programs in Michigan colleges and universities has been consistently falling, most recently by 66% between 2008-09 and 2015-16.² While many disciplines are identified by the annual list of teacher shortage disciplines compiled by the Michigan Department of Education (MDE),³ certain areas are experiencing a more dramatic and troubling shortage of qualified teachers. [Note: The MDE list is used only for identifying shortage areas where retired teachers can return to teaching without losing retirement benefits.⁴] The CRC memo shows a 39% decline in program graduates in special education between 2011-12 and 2015-16. Accordingly, the legislature is considering ways to address these shortages, such as allowing an ITC for special education teachers.

¹https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Alternative_Routes_to_Certification_and_Endorsement_597547_7.PDF

²https://crcmich.org/PUBLICAT/2010s/2019/memo1154-teacher_pipeline.pdf

³https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/2020-21_Critical_Shortage_Retirees_List_683021_7.pdf

⁴https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Critical_Shortage_Information_522944_7.pdf

THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:

Interim teaching certificate

Currently, the code does not allow an ITC for special education.

Under the bill, for an interim teaching certificate for teaching special education for someone who does not hold a Michigan teaching certificate, the person would have to complete a special education training program determined by the superintendent of public instruction to be equivalent to at least 32 college credit hours, or equivalent clock hours equal to seven hours of instruction per credit hour.

The program would have to include training in the requisite knowledge, understanding, skills, and dispositions for effective practice in all of the following:

- Teaching students with an array of disabilities.
- Assessing students with disabilities.
- Accommodating those students.
- Using assistive technology devices to improve students' capabilities.
- Communicating with parents and other concerned parties.
- Developing individualized education programs (IEPs).
- Preparing students for transitions.
- Maintaining and transferring records as required.
- Articulating the rationale for special education.
- Any other criteria determined appropriate by MDE.

For an interim teaching certificate for teaching special education for a person who holds a Michigan teaching certificate, these requirements would not apply (nor would other requirements in the section under an alternate teaching certification process). The person would have to complete an accelerated training program for teaching special education students that met criteria established by MDE and was approved by the superintendent of public instruction.

Required studies and reporting

The bill would require the Center for Educational Performance and Information (CEPI) to partner with one or more Michigan research universities to conduct a research study and analysis on educator shortages in Michigan. MDE would have to make any necessary data available to CEPI and the universities.

Using the study and analysis, CEPI, along with any university partners, would have to submit an initial report to the governor and the education committees in the House of Representatives and Senate by September 15, 2020. The report would have to summarize available state data, provide a baseline from which future comprehensive data analysis could begin, and include recommendations to policymakers on data-gathering activities necessary to complete subsequent comprehensive reports.

Then, using the study and analysis and initial report, CEPI would have to submit annual comprehensive reports, beginning September 15, 2021, to the governor and the education committees in the House of Representatives and Senate.

The annual comprehensive reports would have to include all of the following:

- The number of educator vacancies in Michigan, sorted by geographic region and any broad subject areas and educational settings required for those vacancies.
- The educator retention rates in Michigan, sorted by geographic region, broad subject areas and educational settings, number of years in the profession, and educator demographics.
- The number of graduates from approved, in-state teacher preparation programs, sorted by the broad subject areas and educational settings of the graduates.
- An analysis of the Michigan regions that have the highest need for educators, sorted by the broad subject areas and educational settings needed for the shortage areas.

Interim teaching certificate report

By September 15, 2020, and annually thereafter, MDE would have to submit a report on the number of interim teaching certificates for teaching special education, and the retention rate of those teachers, to the governor and the education committees in the House of Representatives and Senate.

MCL 380.1531i

HOUSE COMMITTEE ACTION:

The House Education committee adopted an H-2 substitute that added a seven-year sunset to the bill, required an initial report in addition to the subsequent annual comprehensive reports, and changed the requirement that shortages be organized by “endorsement” to “broad subject areas and educational settings.” The latter change is understood to track more closely the data currently compiled by CEPI.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

There are currently seven alternate route providers offering Michigan interim certification: #T.E.A.C.H., Davenport University, Michigan Teachers of Tomorrow, Professional Innovators in Teaching, Schoolcraft College, University of Michigan M-ARC (Michigan Alternative Route to Certification), and University of Michigan-Flint.⁵

Previously, section 1531i of the Revised School Code was amended by 2018 PA 106,⁶ which removed the requirement that teachers pass a basic skills examination before receiving an interim teaching certificate. That act also revised the requirements for receiving a certificate so that instead of requiring a candidate to have a 3.0 GPA on a 4.0 scale (or the equivalent), the participants in the candidate’s alternative teaching program must have a cohort GPA of at least 3.0 on a 4.0 scale. As with SB 657, these changes were intended to address the ongoing teacher shortage and remove barriers from prospective teachers seeking to enter the classroom.

⁵ Information about the programs offered by each provider is available here:

<https://mdoe.state.mi.us/moecs/PublicProPrepOrganizations.aspx>

⁶ <http://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/2017-2018/billanalysis/House/pdf/2017-HLA-0727-8AC8BD5D.pdf>

FISCAL INFORMATION:

The bill would increase costs for the state and for local school districts, ISDs, and PSAs.

MDE would incur costs to establish criteria for an accelerated training program for teaching special education students that, upon completion, would allow an individual with a Michigan teaching certificate to receive an ITC for teaching special education. MDE would also incur costs to submit an annual report regarding the number of ITCs issued for teaching special education and the retention rate for teachers who began serving as teachers in Michigan through usage of an ITC. MDE may also incur costs related to state superintendent approval of training programs for teaching special education students, for both individuals with and individuals without a Michigan teaching certificate.

CEPI would incur costs to, in consultation with MDE, partner with one or more research universities to conduct a research study and analysis on educator shortages in Michigan, including an initial report by September 15, 2020, and a comprehensive report by September 15, 2021, and annually thereafter. Some of the data required to be collected under the bill are not currently collected by CEPI and would require CEPI to expand their administrative systems. For example, CEPI does not collect data from nonpublic colleges and universities and therefore cannot track all in-state teacher preparation graduates. CEPI estimates that partnering with a university would cost \$50,000 to \$100,000.

Districts, ISDs, and PSAs would incur costs to submit to CEPI new data outside of the current collection system.

The bill would have a minimal fiscal impact on the selected public research university. Cost increases for the university to partner with CEPI on the research should be minimal or covered under current funding levels.

ARGUMENTS:

For:

The bill sponsor advanced the bill as a way to extend the ability to “fast-track” teacher certification currently available to other teachers to those interested in teaching special education students. After all, testifiers reported shortages of about 300 special education teachers in 2016—why shouldn’t the legislature consider creative ways to fill those gaps? Additionally, the bill’s requirement for CEPI to compile information regarding teacher shortages would allow decision-makers use of the compiled data to consider other steps to address the problem.

Against:

Opponents wondered whether further relaxing the requirements for teachers, especially for an area as specialized and intensive as special education, is desirable. While securing teachers for all classrooms is vital, should we really be setting the bar for entry still lower? Shouldn’t we be addressing the considerations that make individuals less likely to enter teaching and, less likely still, to stay?

Response:

One of the programs offering ITCs for special education spoke to the high-quality online training provided to prospective teachers, and the 16% admission rate for its applicants,

indicating its high standards and competitive environment. The program, already in use in other states around the country, has placed about 1,400 special education teachers and boasts a retention rate of 70% after five years. Other states face the same teacher shortages as Michigan and have addressed them by creating alternate paths for entry. The bill proposes to study shortage trends, sorted by subject area, geographic region, and educational setting, but that should be instituted in conjunction with an immediate move to address those shortage areas.

POSITIONS:

A representative of Teachers for Tomorrow testified in support of the bill. (6-10-20)

The following organizations indicated support for the bill (6-10-20):

Michigan Association of School Boards
Oakland Schools

The following entities indicated opposition to the bill:

Michigan Education Association (6-10-20)
Michigan Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (6-10-20)
Central Michigan Education (6-10-20)
The Arc of Michigan (6-10-20)
Sienna Heights University (6-17-20)
Wayne State University (6-17-20)
Eastern Michigan University (6-17-20)
Michigan State University (6-17-20)
Northern Michigan University (6-17-20)

Legislative Analyst: Jenny McInerney
Fiscal Analysts: Samuel Christensen
Jacqueline Mullen
Perry Zielak

■ 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.