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Senate Bill 518 (as passed by the Senate)
Sponsor: Senator Darrin Camilleri
Committee: Education

(enacted version)

Date Completed: 11-27-23

RATIONALE

According to the United States Department of Education, Michigan is experiencing a critical shortage of special education teachers for grades pre-K through 12. From 2012 to 2016, the State saw a 39% decline in special education graduates.¹ In 2020, Public Act 316 attempted to address this issue by establishing a process for an individual to earn an interim teaching certificate (ITC) with a special education endorsement. An ITC is a Michigan-issued teaching certificate that allows the holder to teach full-time in a Michigan school while enrolled in an expedited teacher preparation program. According to testimony before the Senate Committee on Education, the program is working; however, it has not been implemented long enough to gather solid data.² Accordingly, it has been suggested that the program's sunset be extended.

CONTENT

The bill would amend Part 22 (School Personnel Certificates and Permits) of the Revised School Code to extend, from July 21, 2024, to July 21, 2027, the date after which the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) could no longer issue an ITC to an individual to teach special education.

Among other things, Part 22 authorizes the SPI to establish a process for an individual to earn an ITC, which qualifies that individual to teach in public schools and to earn a Michigan teaching certificate. The Code allows the SPI to grant an ITC for teaching special education until July 21, 2024. An individual granted an ITC to teach special education before July 21, 2024, could continue to teach special education after this date.

The bill would extend the sunset on this provision from July 21, 2024, to July 21, 2027.

MCL 380.1531i

ARGUMENTS

(Please note: The arguments contained in this analysis originate from sources outside the Senate Fiscal Agency. The Senate Fiscal Agency neither supports nor opposes legislation.)

Supporting Argument

Some believe that the high education requirements for special education teachers contribute to the current shortage; receiving a special education endorsement is time-consuming, often requiring four and a half years for education majors to meet the requirements.³ According to testimony before the Senate Committee on Education, the ITC program has produced 45

¹ "Special Education Teacher Shortage in Michigan", Michigan Teachers of Tomorrow, December 9, 2019. Retrieved on 11-17-2023.

² Public Act 316 took effect July 21, 2021.

³ Lohman, Isabel, "Finding a fix for Michigan's special education teacher shortage", *Bridge Michigan*, November 13, 2023.

endorsements. While these new teachers have not had a chance to prove their effectiveness, they could alleviate the special education teacher shortage. The ITC with a special education endorsement program should be extended to give more individuals a chance to help alleviate the shortage and allow for more data to be gathered on their performance.

Opposing Argument

Students, especially those with special needs, deserve properly trained teachers. Interim teaching certificates are less rigorous than traditional certification programs and may produce teachers who are less prepared for the struggles of the classroom. COVID-19 already has hurt student learning and extending the ITC program could lower the standards for teachers and further harm students' learning.

Response: Students are suffering because of a shortage of teachers, with many being taught by substitute teachers. The ITC program aids *qualified* individuals in achieving an ITC. This includes working teachers who do not yet have a special education endorsement and individuals with a bachelor's degree. While traditionally certified teachers may be the most effective, these teachers would likely benefit classrooms and improve student learning.

Legislative Analyst: Abby Schneider

FISCAL IMPACT

The bill would have no fiscal impact on the State or local units of governments. Current costs for ITCs for the State and local units of governments would continue until July 21, 2027.

Fiscal Analyst: Cory Savino, PhD

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This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan Senate staff for use by the Senate in its deliberations and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.