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Legislative Update

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Lame Duck Continues as Year-end Approaches

The fast-moving end-of-year lame duck legislative session continued this week, marked by a flurry of hearings and votes aimed at advancing legislation before the sine die adjournment of the 102nd Michigan Legislature. This week has seen late-night and early-morning sessions, including a non-traditional Friday session in the House today, December 13, with 119 bills on the preliminary agenda.



As is tradition, at this point in every two-year legislative session, all conversations in Lansing start to revolve around the "five-day rule". Article 4, Section 26 of the Michigan Constitution reads in part: "No bill shall be passed or become a law at any regular session of the legislature until it has been printed or reproduced and in the possession of each house for at least five days."

This means that for a bill to potentially pass before year-end, it must clear its first chamber by today, December 13, to allow time for a vote in the other chamber by December 19—the expected final session day of the year.

What follows is a summary of the recent movement of bills of interest to K-12 schools, as of 10:30 am on December 13.

Computer Science Course Requirement Sent to Governor



House Bill 5649 was sent to Governor Whitmer for her signature, following passage by both the Senate and House. Beginning with the 2027-2028 school year, public high schools will be required to offer at least one computer science course focused on the study of computers, algorithmic processes, and teaching students how to create new technologies. While schools must make a good-faith effort to offer the course in person, a virtual option will be allowed.

Bills Awaiting a Vote on Senate Floor

Firearm Storage Notice

The Senate Education Committee advanced House Bills **5450** and **5451,** which call for the Department of Health and Human Services to develop an informational notice on the safe storage of firearms by June 1, 2025.

Starting October 1, 2025, and every October 1 thereafter, schools would be required to distribute the notice to parents/guardians. Included would be an overview of safe storage requirements under the Handgun Licensure Act; answers to frequently asked questions about firearm storage requirements; and information about where parents/guardians can obtain gun locks and gun safes.

Counselor Credential Renewal

Legislation to revise requirements for renewing school counselor credentials passed the Senate Education Committee.

Senate Bill 1142 seeks to reduce the number of professional development hours needed for renewal from 25 to 10. The 10 hours could include a combination of professional development in the areas of college preparation and readiness, career counseling and development, and exploration of military options.

If passed by the Senate, the House would still need to weigh in.



Public Employer Health Care Contribution Limits

Multiple bills are currently in play between the House and Senate that would modify employer and employee cost sharing of public employee health care premiums. **House Bill 6058** and Senate Bills **1129** and **1130** would amend the Publicly Funded Health Insurance Contribution Act, Public Act 152 of 2011, to increase hard cap contribution limits and modify 80/20 premium sharing provisions. We do not yet know what changes to PA 152 of 2011 will ultimately be agreed upon by legislators the week of December 16.

Bills Awaiting a Vote on House Floor

School Employees' Pension Plan

The House Labor Committee reported two bills (House Bills **6060** and **6061**) that would allow both newly hired and current public school employees to opt into a Tier 1 (defined benefit pension) plan of the Michigan Public School Employees Retirement System. MPSERS' traditional Tier 1 pension plans have been closed to new employees since July 1, 2010. If passed by the House, the bills would head to the Senate for consideration.

Mandatory Kindergarten

The House Education Committee advanced Senate-approved legislation that would require children who are five years old by September 1 to be enrolled in kindergarten, beginning with the 2025-2026 school year.

Key provisions of **Senate Bill 285**:

- Require schools that offer first grade to also provide kindergarten.
- Allow a parent/guardian to delay a child's enrollment for one year.
- Allow, but not require, a child who turns five by December 1 to be enrolled in kindergarten for that school year.

If approved, the bill would be presented to Governor Whitmer for her signature.

Michigan Merit Curriculum Modification

The House Education Committee passed **House Bill 5735**, which proposes changes to the Michigan Merit Curriculum requirements for high school graduation. The bill would remove references to specific courses listed for math, science, and social science.

FAFSA Graduation Requirement

Also approved by the House Education Committee is legislation that would make completing the FAFSA a requirement for high school graduation starting with the 2025-2026 school year. Exemptions would be allowed.

Key school responsibilities would include:

- Distributing a FAFSA informational packet to each student at least once before 12th grade.
- Reporting annual data to the Michigan Department of Education.
- Posting FAFSA completion and waiver data on the school's website each year.

If passed by the House, **Senate Bill 463** will be presented to the Governor.

Senate Bills Transmitted to the House

Charter School Transparency

Senate Bills **943**, **944**, **946**, and **947** would enact a number of changes to state law regarding reporting requirements and disclosure for charter schools.

Teacher Licensing

Senate Bill 354 would grant the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) the authority to issue a Michigan teaching certificate to individuals who hold or are eligible to hold a valid teaching certificate in another state or from a federally recognized Indian tribe. To qualify, applicants would need to have passed either the reading subtest developed by the SPI or a reading test approved by the other state or Federally recognized Indian tribe, along with an existing licensing exam. The bill was referred to the House Education Committee.

Pre-K Student Teacher Stipend

Under **Senate Bill 995**, the MI Future Educator Student Teacher Stipend Program would be extended to preschool student teachers. The program provides up to $9,600 per semester for full-time, unpaid student teachers who meet certain eligibility requirements.

Firearm Safety Instruction

Senate Bill 664 would require the Department of Education, in collaboration with the Department of Natural Resources, to adopt a model program of firearm safety instruction for students in 6th-12th grade by June 1, 2025. The instruction would have to be:

- Available to schools by June 1, 2025.
- At least eight hours in duration.
- Comply with the DNR's safe firearm handling course.
- Be taught by a certified hunter education instructor.

Students who complete the instruction would be considered to have completed the hunter safety course necessary for obtaining a hunting license as a minor.



House Bills Transmitted to the Senate

Organ Donor Education

House Bill 5174 would require schools to educate ninth graders on Michigan's organ donor program beginning in the 2025-2026 school year. Michigan Department of Education would be charged with developing or adopting a model presentation on organ, eye, and tissue donation and transplantation programs. Parents/Guardians could opt their children out of attending the presentation.

'Stop the Bleed' Instruction

House Bill 5741 seeks to modify health education courses for students in 7th-12th grades, to include training on using first aid kits to stop bleeding. The bill outlines the materials the kits must contain and encourages the use of local firefighters, paramedics, or other properly trained individuals to provide the instruction.

School Safety Terminology

Five bills that call for standardizing terminology used during school emergencies passed the House with bipartisan support after they were reported by the House Education Committee.

- **House Bill 4095** would standardize response plan terminology and require schools to adopt and implement the wording by the start of the 2026-2027 school year.
- **HB 4096** would mandate the Department of State Police, in collaboration with the School Safety Commission, to develop and implement a standardized response terminology plan.
- **HB 5549** would require schools, starting October 1, 2026, to form a behavioral threat assessment and management team responsible for educating the school community about warning signs that a student could be at risk. The bill also directs the Department of State Police to create and provide training materials to schools upon request.
- HBs **5659** and **5660** propose revisions to the membership terms of the School Safety Commission.

Newly Introduced Bills

Cyber Bullying

Legislation (**HB 6250**) referred to the House Education Committee calls for the Michigan Department of Education to develop or adopt a model program for instruction on the prevention of cyber bullying and harassment, tailored to each grade level. Schools would be strongly encouraged to incorporate the program into their curricula.

Revisions to Limitations on Mills

House Bill 6277 calls for revising the limitations on mills levied for school operating purposes.

School Aid Fund Supplemental

House Bill 6217—referred to the House Tax Policy Committee—calls for increasing the corporate tax from the current 6% to 8.5%, effective January 1, 2025. The additional revenue generated from this tax increase would be directed to the School Aid Fund.

School Safety Plan

Senate Bill 1177 calls for creating a statewide behavioral threat assessment and management program to identify, assess, manage, and monitor potential and real threats to schools. **Under SB 1176**, $13 million would be appropriated from the state's Fiscal Year 2025-2026 general fund for the program, to be overseen by the Department of Treasury. The bills were referred to the Senate Education Committee.



Cultural Competency

A package of three bills referred to the Senate Education Committee aims to ensure K-12 students receive age-appropriate instruction on institutional and societal discrimination, as well as the history of marginalized populations.

- **Senate Bill 1145** would require schools, starting with the 2027-2028 school year, to include one unit of instruction within history in each of the following areas: African American history, Indigenous Peoples history, Asian American history, Pacific Islander history, Latin American history, Hispanic American history, Caribbean American history, Arab American history, North African history, Chaldean American history, and Jewish American history.
- Under **SB 1146**, the Michigan Department of Education would be required to develop or adopt and distribute resources for professional learning on cultural competency. Starting in the 2027-2028 school year, all school employees who interact with students would be required to complete cultural competency training using these resources.
- **SB 1147** calls for the creation of a Cultural History Advisory Board, responsible for providing recommendations on K-12 curriculum and professional development related to cultural competency to the Michigan Department of Education.