



Please Support SBs 805-806, Legislation Addressing Implementation Issues with New Professional Development Requirements for School Counselors

March 2020

Bill Sponsors:

Sen. Jeff Irwin, D-Ann Arbor) and Sen. Lana Theis, R-Brighton)

Status of Bills:

Introduced on February 27, 2020 and referred to the Senate Committee on Education & Career Readiness

Cosponsors:

Senators McBroom, Bullock, Wojno, Chang, Bayer, Polehanki

What do the bills do?

SB 805:

- Changes the nullification process to include a means by which a teacher with an “N/T endorsement,” not currently in a counseling position, can put their school counselor credential “on hold;” and
- Provides individuals who put their school counselor credential “on hold” a means by which to reactivate the N//T endorsement (again, a type of school counselor credential), and providing a specific timeframe for acquiring the 50 prescribed hours professional development for renewal.

SB 806

- Extends deadline for compliance from February 6, 2020 to July 1, 2021, to allow adequate time for all school counselors to access quality professional development. The renewal cycle is 5 years and this new requirement should be within that approximate framework; and
- Expands professional development opportunities to include Department Provided Professional Development (DPPD) and college course work which meet the MDE Counselor Professional Development Standards.

Background:

In November 2017, the Legislature passed and then Gov. Snyder signed into law, legislation mandating 50 hours of prescribed professional development for the renewal of school counseling credentials for school counselors. Specifically, Public Act 151 of 2017 amended the Revised School Code to prohibit the Department of Education, beginning two years after the bill's effective date, from renewing an individual's school counselor credential unless the Department determined that the individual had completed Department-approved professional development, including at least 25 hours of professional development covering college preparation and selection counseling and at least 25 hours of professional development covering career counseling.

Almost immediately, lawmakers began hearing concerns from constituent school counselors. Concerns included:

1. Inadequate time between enactment and enforcement (Dec. 2018 – Feb. 2020) for school counselors to access quality professional development in the required areas.
2. This limited time frame resulted in limited professional development opportunities. Only State Continuing Education Clock Hours (SCECHs) were allowed by MDE. This restricted school counselors from receiving credit for appropriate District Provided Professional Development (DPPD) and college course credit.
3. Not all individuals with a school counselor credential are fulfilling the role of a school counselor. Some are teaching in non-counseling roles with an “N/T endorsement” – one of the three existing school counselor credentials. Under PA 151, these individuals are required to obtain the mandated 50 hours to keep their teaching certificate. This led to teachers having to get PD in areas not directly related to their current assignments, sometimes with limitations on release time from administrators.
4. In order to nullify an N/T endorsement, an educator must not have been in a school counseling position for 12 years. Otherwise, they lose not just their school counselor credential but their teaching certificate!
5. The decision to nullify a school counselor credential, at present is permanent and can never be regained.
6. With the narrow timeline, quality professional development was difficult to access. Also, at issue was appropriate professional development for all school counselors, especially those at an elementary level for whom college advisement and admissions is irrelevant.

Legislative solutions in SBs 805-806, sponsored by Senators Irwin and Theis:

1. The timeline for enforcement (Feb. 2020) needs to be extended to allow adequate time for all school counselors to access quality professional development. The renewal cycle is 5 years and this new requirement should be within that approximate framework.
2. Professional development opportunities need to be expanded to include Department Provided Professional Development (DPPD) and college course work which meet the MDE Counselor Professional Development Standards.
3. Changes to the nullification process should include a means by which a teacher with an “N/T endorsement,” not currently in a counseling position, could put their school counselor credential “on hold.”
4. These same individuals should have a means by which to reactivate the N//T endorsement (again, a type of school counselor credential), providing a specific timeframe for acquiring the 50 prescribed hours professional development for renewal.

If you have questions or concerns, please contact the governmental affairs consultant for the Michigan School Counselor Association (MSCA), Jean Doss at jdoss@capitol-services.org or at (517)202-2302.