

Legislative Analysis



PSYCHOLOGIST LICENSING: DOCTORAL LEVEL

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Senate Bill 880 (Substitute H-1)

Sponsor: Sen. Vincent Gregory

House Committee: Health Policy

Senate Committee: Health Policy

Complete to 10-31-14

A SUMMARY OF SENATE BILL 880 AS REPORTED BY HOUSE COMMITTEE

The bill makes several revisions to the criteria for the doctoral degree programs whose graduates are eligible for licensure as a psychologist. In particular, it would extend the accreditation deadline for such programs from August 31, 2015, to August 31, 2020, as described in more detail later.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Senate Bill 880 would not have a significant fiscal impact on the Bureau of Health Care Services (BHCS) within the Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Under the Public Health Code, except as provided for limited licensure, to be eligible for licensure as a psychologist, an individual must obtain a doctoral degree in psychology or a closely related field that includes education and training appropriate to the practice of psychology from a regionally accredited or other college, university, or institution approved by the Michigan Board of Psychology.

In addition, the doctoral degree in psychology or a closely related field must be from a doctoral program that has obtained accreditation by certain national and Canadian entities, or has obtained a similar designation from or been accredited by an entity approved by the board. This requirement was added by a departmental rule revision that took effect August 1, 2011 (R 338.2511(4) of the Michigan Administrative Code).

However, the year before that rule change went into effect, it became apparent that one institution of higher learning that was in the process of applying for accreditation as specified by the rule change was unlikely to complete the process by the rule's effective date. Senate Bill 1315 of 2010, which had been introduced to codify the upcoming rule change, was amended in the House to allow that school's program, and any others, to be considered as meeting the new requirement if they were in the process of becoming accredited by the rule's effective date and became accredited on or before August 31, 2015. Senate Bill 1315 became Public Act 121 of 2010.

The Michigan School of Professional Psychology, the subject of the 2010 legislation, is a nonprofit school offering only graduate-level psychology degree programs. The school is in the process of applying for accreditation by the American Psychological Association but reports that it is unlikely to complete the process by the 2015 deadline due to the time needed to respond to the APA's request for additional quantitative research. The school believes it can complete the process and receive accreditation if the deadline were extended another five years. The school's current accreditation expires in 2019, meaning that if the deadline is not extended, current doctoral students would have to complete their programs and graduate by the 2019 expiration date or be ineligible for licensure as a PhD psychologist and no new doctoral students can be admitted to the program as there is insufficient time for them to complete the program.

Thus, the bill would enable the school sufficient time to complete the accreditation process and to continue offering a doctorate degree in psychology to current and future students.

CONTENT:

Senate Bill 880 amends the Public Health Code (MCL 333.18223) to extend the deadline from August 31, 2015, to August 31, 2020, for a doctoral program to obtain accreditation in order to meet the criteria added by rule in 2011 and codified in Public Act 121 of 2010.

(If enacted, this would mean that students graduating from a doctoral psychology program from a school that—prior to August 31, 2011—was in the process of obtaining accreditation as required under Public Act 121 and the 2011 rule change would still be eligible for licensure as a psychologist as long as the program completes the accreditation process or obtains designation from a board-approved entity before August 31, 2020.)

Thus, to be licensed as a psychologist under the bill, with the exception of limited license granted to a person with a master's degree in psychology, an individual must receive a doctoral degree in psychology or a closely related field from a doctoral degree program that meets both of the following:

- Is offered by a board-approved regionally accredited or other college, university, or institution that includes education and training appropriate to the practice of psychology; and,
- Has obtained accreditation from one of the listed entities (including a program in the process of obtaining accreditation as described above).

Lastly, instead of placing rule-making requirements with the Board of Psychology, rule-making authority would be vested in the Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA), in consultation with the board.

POSITIONS:

A representative of the Michigan School of Professional Psychology testified in support of the bill on 9-16-14 and indicated support for the substitute on 9-30-14.

The Michigan Association of Health Plans indicated support for the bill on 9-16-14 and 9-30-14.

A representative of the Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA) testified in opposition to the bill on 9-16-14, but the H-1 substitute addresses the department's concern.

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