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Management and Budget and president of the State Board of Education (or their designees), four people appointed by the governor (two representing the private sector and two representing school districts) and four at-large members (two appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives and two appointed by the Senate majority leader). Commission members would have to be appointed within 60 days of the bill's effective date, and would serve three-year terms with the first set of members serving staggered terms. Members would not be paid, but could be reimbursed for expenses incurred while doing commission business. The bill would also provide for the filling of vacancies and the removal of those members appointed by the governor for causes such as incompetency or dereliction of duty. The State Board of Education president would have to call the first meeting, at which time a chairperson and other officers (as deemed necessary) would be elected. After that, the commission would meet at least four times a year. Meetings would have to be conducted in compliance with the Open Meetings Act (MCL 15.261-15.275), and documents meeting certain criteria would be subject to public disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act (MCL 15.231-15.246).

Commission duties would include the development of a statewide school technology plan to improve the state's school technology capability, a model technology system, a model Internet usage policy for school staff and pupils, and professional development models for training teachers and other staff in technology, and would also include ascertaining and evaluating the current status of school technology in the state, gathering information and reporting on usage of universal service funds received by public schools, and identifying issues concerning distance learning programs. Further, the commission would have to develop and submit to the governor, the legislature, and the State Board of Education a report on its activities and its recommendations concerning the above subjects not later than November 1, 2000 and November 1 of each subsequent even-numbered year.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:

Fiscal information is not available. (6-22-98)

ARGUMENTS:

For:

Recent surveys have shown Michigan schools lagging woefully behind the other states in such areas as

teacher training in technology, percentage of schools being connected to the Internet, and pupils-to-computer ratios. Since technology is increasing at such a rapid rate, it is imperative that any measures that could monitor and assess the technological capabilities of schools, and aid schools through the development of various models for staff training and technology uses, be adopted. The bill, by creating the State School Technology Commission, would provide a way to better monitor the technological level of the state's schools and would raise consciousness of the importance of increasing the technological abilities of students. In addition, some see the commission as a unifying force to bring order and accountability in the area of technology, and as a resource for schools to get information on educational models. School districts must make many decisions on technology issues, and a commission could provide meaningful information and help.

Against:

Some of the commission's required duties would be duplications of other initiatives already in place. For example, the bill would require the ten-member commission to create a state technology plan. A 40-plus member advisory council to the State Board of Education, the ETAG, has already done so, and it has already been approved by the U.S. Department of Education, a necessary step in qualifying for numerous federal grant projects. In addition, many of the committee's other proposed duties would be duplications of initiatives proposed and, in some cases, already initiated, under the state plan. For example, the State Technology Plan calls for creation of a clearinghouse to disseminate information on educational models for staff training, pupil usage, helpful software applications, and so on. In fact, the MDE is already pioneering a clearinghouse of this type (the Michigan Statewide Systemic Initiative's Dialogue Web project). Many institutions in the state also provide similar resources, such as the Wayne County Regional Educational Service Agency, which offers instructional software, lab activities, lesson plans and student-created materials for elementary and secondary science and mathematics instruction through its Explorer Resource Library. In short, where the commission could provide additional advisory assistance to school districts and raise the public's awareness of the importance of increasing the technological capabilities of the state's pupils and teachers, it would be of benefit. However, the bill perhaps should be amended to eliminate requirements that would be unduly expensive and duplicative of initiatives already in place.

POSITIONS:

A representative of the Michigan Education Association (MEA) testified in support of the bill. (4-28-98)

The Department of Education has not taken a formal position on the bill. (6-19-98)

The Michigan Association of School Administrators has no formal position on the bill. (6-19-98)

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■ This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan House staff for use by House members in their deliberations, and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.