

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5539

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Education, February 24, 1995

Title: An act relating to educational waivers.

Brief Description: Authorizing waivers for educational restructuring.

Sponsors: Senators McAuliffe, Hochstatter and Rasmussen; by request of Board of Education and Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Education: 1/27/95, 2/17/95, 2/24/95 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5539 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators McAuliffe, Chair; Pelz, Vice Chair; Finkbeiner, Gaspard, Hochstatter, Johnson and Rasmussen.

Staff: Leslie Goldstein (786-7424)

Background: In 1987, the Legislature created the Schools for the 21st Century program. The purpose of the program was to enable educators and parents of selected school districts to restructure school operations and develop model school programs that would improve student performance. The program ended in June, 1994.

Under the program, schools could apply for waivers from specified state requirements, including: the length of the school year, teacher contact hours, program hour offerings, student teacher ratios, salary lid compliance, the commingling of categorical funds, and administrative rules. These waivers expired when the program ended in June, 1994

Under the education reform legislation in 1992 and 1993, school districts were permitted to apply for certain waivers. School districts were authorized to apply for waivers from the self-study requirement, the teacher-student contact hour requirement, and portions of the program hour offering requirement.

Waivers are permitted for schools participating in certain pilot programs. Schools participating in the special services demonstration pilot project may apply for waivers to implement their programs. Districts participating in the school-to-work transitions program may apply for waivers necessary to implement their programs.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The State Board of Education and the Superintendent of Public Instruction may grant waivers to school districts from statutes and rules relating to the length of the school year and student-to-teacher ratios. Other administrative rules may

also be waived if needed in order for a district to implement a school or school district educational restructuring program.

School districts may apply for waivers using the Student Learning Improvement grant application process or the education restructuring plan application process.

The Joint Select Committee on Education Restructuring must study the use of waivers in implementing education reform and under the Schools for the 21st Century program.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The authority to waive prohibitions against commingling categorical funds is deleted. A study of waivers is added.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: Although there is not a substantial history of demand for these waivers, as the state continues to encourage innovation and grant greater flexibility to districts, the authority to grant waivers might help districts.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Candy Curl, State Board of Education (pro); Ben Edlund (pro).