

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 5305

*As Passed House - Amended
March 5, 1992*

Title: An act relating to school suspension.

Brief Description: Conditioning the reduction of a student's suspension on the commencement of counseling.

Sponsor(s): By Senate Committee on Education (originally sponsored by Senators Owen and Craswell).

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Education, February 24, 1992, DP;
Passed House, March 5, 1992, 97-0.

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION**

Majority Report: *Do pass.* Signed by 16 members:
Representatives Peery, Chair; G. Fisher, Vice Chair; Brough,
Ranking Minority Member; Vance, Assistant Ranking Minority
Member; Broback; Brumsickle; Carlson; G. Cole; Dorn;
P. Johnson; Jones; J. Kohl; Neher; Orr; Roland; and Valle.

Staff: Robert Butts (786-7111).

Background: Under current law, the state Board of Education is required to adopt and distribute rules and regulations prescribing the substantive and procedural due process guarantees of students in the common schools. Pursuant to that statutory authority, the state Board of Education has adopted rules regarding short-term and long-term suspension of students. Local school boards also adopt codes of conduct for students.

There have been cases in which school districts would rather refer a student with discipline problems to counseling instead of suspending the student. However, school districts are concerned that the school district will be financially liable for the counseling.

Summary of Bill: A school district may reduce the length of a student's suspension if the student undergoes counseling or other treatment services.

Consistent with current law, a school district is not obligated to pay for counseling or treatment services except for those services agreed to by the district.

The Superintendent of Public Instruction is directed to encourage school districts to utilize community service as an alternative to student suspension. At a minimum, the superintendent shall prepare and distribute information to school districts regarding alternative to suspension programs, and attempt to clarify and resolve any potential liability, supervision, and transportation issues.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: We need alternatives to just suspending students when they get into trouble. In some cases, counseling is a good alternative. However, a recent court case concluded that school districts would be financially liable if they offer counseling as alternative. This bill would remove the school district's liability for paying for the counseling.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: Senator Owen, prime sponsor.