

HOUSE BILL NO. 21

INTRODUCED BY D. BEDEY

BY REQUEST OF THE LEGISLATIVE FINANCE COMMITTEE

A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT REVISING THE PROCESS FOR ADOPTION OF SCHOOL ACCREDITATION STANDARDS; REQUIRING THAT ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENTS FOR CERTAIN ACCREDITATION STANDARDS INCLUDE AN ANALYSIS OF THE TIME REQUIRED FOR IMPLEMENTATION; REASSIGNING THE REVIEW OF ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENTS TO LEGISLATIVE BUDGET COMMITTEES; REQUIRING THE BOARD OF PUBLIC EDUCATION TO REQUEST THE SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION TO SEEK FUNDING FOR STANDARDS DETERMINED DURING THE LEGISLATIVE INTERIM TO REQUIRE SUBSTANTIAL EXPENDITURES; AMENDING SECTION 20-7-101, MCA; AND PROVIDING EFFECTIVE DATES AND A TERMINATION DATE."

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

Section 1. Section 20-7-101, MCA, is amended to read:

"20-7-101. ~~Standards of accreditation~~ Accreditation standards -- process for adoption. (1)

~~Standards of accreditation.~~ (a) Accreditation standards, as defined in 20-1-101, for all schools must be adopted by the board of public education upon the recommendations of the superintendent of public instruction. The superintendent shall develop recommendations in accordance with subsection (2). ~~The~~ For an accreditation standard that requires implementation by school districts, the recommendations presented to the board must include an economic impact statement, as described in 2-4-405, prepared in consultation with the negotiated rulemaking committee under subsection (2).

(b) For accreditation standards addressing academic requirements, program area standards, or content and performance standards, the economic impact statement under subsection (1)(a) must include an analysis of the ability of school districts to implement the standard within existing resources, including time. The intent of this subsection (1)(b) is to ensure that school districts have the capacity to adhere to required accreditation standards within a basic system of free quality public elementary and secondary schools.

(2) The accreditation standards recommended by the superintendent of public instruction must be developed through the negotiated rulemaking process under Title 2, chapter 5, part 1. The superintendent may form a negotiated rulemaking committee for accreditation standards to consider multiple proposals. The negotiated rulemaking committee may not exist for longer than 2 years. The committee must represent the diverse circumstances of schools of all sizes across the state and must include representatives from the following groups:

- (a) school district trustees;
- (b) school administrators;
- (c) teachers;
- (d) school business officials;
- (e) parents; and
- (f) taxpayers.

(3) Prior to adoption or amendment of any accreditation standard, the board shall submit each proposal, including the economic impact statement required under subsection (1), to:

- (a) during a regular legislative session, the joint appropriations subcommittee on education; or
- (b) during the legislative interim, the education interim budget committee established in 5-12-501.

for review at least 1 month in advance of a scheduled committee meeting. ~~Information provided during an interim must be provided to the legislature in accordance with 5-11-210.~~

(4) Unless the expenditures by school districts required under the proposal are determined by the ~~education interim appropriate~~ committee under subsection (3) to be insubstantial expenditures that can be readily absorbed into the budgets of existing district programs, the board may not implement the standard until July 1 following:

- (a) under subsection (3)(a), the current legislative session; or
- (b) under subsection (3)(b), the next regular legislative session and shall request the superintendent of public instruction include a request in the superintendent's budget that the same legislature fund implementation of the proposed standard.

(5) The provisions of this section may not be construed to reduce or limit the authority of the

1 education interim committee to review administrative rules, including accreditation standards, within its
2 jurisdiction pursuant to 5-5-215.

3 ~~(5)~~(6) Standards for the retention of school records must be as provided in 20-1-212."

5 **Section 2.** Section 20-7-101, MCA, is amended to read:

6 **"20-7-101. ~~Standards of accreditation~~ Accreditation standards -- process for adoption. (1)**

7 ~~Standards of accreditation.~~ (a) Accreditation standards, as defined in 20-1-101, for all schools must be adopted
8 by the board of public education upon the recommendations of the superintendent of public instruction. The
9 superintendent shall develop recommendations in accordance with subsection (2). ~~The~~ For an accreditation
10 standard that requires implementation by school districts, the recommendations presented to the board must
11 include an economic impact statement, as described in 2-4-405, prepared in consultation with the negotiated
12 rulemaking committee under subsection (2).

13 (b) For accreditation standards addressing academic requirements, program area standards, or
14 content and performance standards, the economic impact statement under subsection (1)(a) must include an
15 analysis of the ability of school districts to implement the standard within existing resources, including time. The
16 intent of this subsection (1)(b) is to ensure that school districts have the capacity to adhere to required
17 accreditation standards within a basic system of free quality public elementary and secondary schools.

18 (2) The accreditation standards recommended by the superintendent of public instruction must be
19 developed through the negotiated rulemaking process under Title 2, chapter 5, part 1. The superintendent may
20 form a negotiated rulemaking committee for accreditation standards to consider multiple proposals. The
21 negotiated rulemaking committee may not exist for longer than 2 years. The committee must represent the
22 diverse circumstances of schools of all sizes across the state and must include representatives from the
23 following groups:

- 24 (a) school district trustees;
- 25 (b) school administrators;
- 26 (c) teachers;
- 27 (d) school business officials;
- 28 (e) parents; and

(f) taxpayers.

(3) Prior to adoption or amendment of any accreditation standard, the board shall submit each proposal, including the economic impact statement required under subsection (1), to:

(a) during a regular legislative session, the joint appropriations subcommittee on education; or

(b) during the legislative interim, the ~~education interim legislative finance~~ committee, established in 5-12-201, for review at least 1 month in advance of a scheduled committee meeting. Information provided during an interim must be provided to the legislature in accordance with 5-11-210.

(4) Unless the expenditures by school districts required under the proposal are determined by the ~~education interim appropriate~~ committee under subsection (3) to be insubstantial expenditures that can be readily absorbed into the budgets of existing district programs, the board may not implement the standard until July 1 following:

(a) under subsection (3)(a), the current legislative session; or

(b) under subsection (3)(b), the next regular legislative session and shall request the superintendent of public instruction include a request in the superintendent's budget that the same legislature fund implementation of the proposed standard.

(5) The provisions of this section may not be construed to reduce or limit the authority of the education interim committee to review administrative rules, including accreditation standards, within its jurisdiction pursuant to 5-5-215.

~~(5)(6)~~ Standards for the retention of school records must be as provided in 20-1-212."

NEW SECTION. Section 3. Effective dates. (1) Except as provided in subsection (2), [this act] is effective on passage and approval.

(2) [Section 2] is effective January 1, 2026.

NEW SECTION. Section 4. Termination. [Section 1] terminates December 31, 2025.

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