

QUARTERLY ASCERTAINMENTS / COMMUNITY ISSUES

STATION: WAJR—April, 2021

SUBJECT: Bill would allow public school students to repeat Covid affected year.

DISCUSSION:

A bill that would allow students to repeat a year in school and sports because of the impact of the pandemic is moving through the House of Delegates following approval Thursday by the House Education Committee.

The measure, HB 2806, says a supplemental school year would be provided.

According to the bill's language, "Any student enrolled in a West Virginia public school during the 2020-2021 school year may request to use the 2021-2022 school year as a supplemental school year to retake or supplement the courses the student has already taken."

The bill would require county school boards to make decisions by June 30, 2021 on whether the county would offer the extra year program. The bill says requests from parents have to be in to their local school board by June 15.

A county school board could decide against offering the supplemental year as a whole. Decisions on individual cases are not permitted in the bill.

The bill's main sponsor is Del. Mark Dean, R-Mingo, who is also a school administrator.

Some members of the education committee questioned Sarah Stewart, state Department of Education executive director for policy and government relations, about the possible impact of the bill.

Stewart said the bill is silent on many issues but most of the decisions would be made by local school boards.

"I'm not sure whether or not they'd be employing new teachers to cover the additional students that enrolled," Stewart said. "Certainly they would be included under state aid (the state aid formula) and there would be additional funding."

The committee amended the original bill adopting age requirements for playing sports already in place under West Virginia Secondary Schools Activities Commission rules. A second amendment would require the student to attend the same school during the repeat year. A third amendment makes the program available for next year only.

"We don't want this to go on for perpetuity. It would just basically be next school year," Del. Ed Evans, D-McDowell, said.

Stewart said the state Department of Education hasn't fielded many calls from parents interested in their child adding a year of school.

"I am not aware of requests made to continue another academic year. I have heard conversations and I don't know the volume about staying another year to compete in athletics," Stewart said.

The bill is also silent on how many courses have to be taken or what a student's GPA would have to be to play sports for another year but Stewart said the bill does give the SSAC rule-making authority where many of those questions could be answered.

"I think that that could be fleshed out given the rule-making authority given to the SSAC," Stewart said.

The bill next goes to the House Finance Committee for consideration.

DATE: Sunday, April 4th, 2021

TIME / DURATION: 2:15

GUESTS: Sarah Stewart, state Department of Education executive director for policy and government relations and Delegate Ed Evans, D-McDowell Co.

MEDIA INTEREST: Morgantown AM – WAJR, Dominion Post, WVAQ, WKKW, WBOY, WDTV, facebook, twitter

YEAR: 2021

QUARTER: 2nd