

## ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY TASK FORCE

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<http://www.house.mi.gov/hfa>

**House Bill 4961 as introduced**  
**Sponsor: Rep. Julie M. Rogers**  
**Committee: Education**  
**Complete to 10-2-23**

Analysis available at  
<http://www.legislature.mi.gov>

### SUMMARY:

House Bill 4961 would amend the Revised School Code to establish a 13-member Environmental Literacy Task Force. The bill would establish the task force's membership and duties and would designate it as a temporary commission under section 4 of Article V of the state constitution. A temporary commission may exist for up to two years and does not have to be placed within a department, meaning that, while the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) would be required to provide staffing and support, the bill does not create the task force within MDE.

The thirteen members would be as follows:

- The superintendent of public instruction (state superintendent) or their designee.
- The director of the Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) or their designee
- One member representing the Water Resources Division of EGLE, as appointed by the director of that department.
- The director of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), or their designee, as well as each of the following individuals appointed by the director:
  - One member representing the Parks and Recreation Division.
  - One member representing the Wildlife Division.
  - One member representing the Forest Resources Division.
  - One member representing the Fisheries Division.
- The director of the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) or their designee.
- A representative of the Michigan Science Teachers Association.
- A representative of the Michigan Association of School Administrators.
- A representative of the Michigan Association of Secondary School Principals.
- A representative of the Michigan Elementary and Middle School Principals Association.

The first members would have to be appointed to the task force within 30 days of its creation. If a member left the task force, an individual appointed or designated from the same organization would have to replace them.

Meetings of the task force would be subject to the Open Meetings Act, and a writing prepared, owned, used, in the possession of, or retained by the task force in the performance of an official function would be subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). A

majority of members of the task force would constitute a quorum for purposes of conducting business, and a majority of those present and serving would be necessary for taking an official action. Members would serve without compensation but could be reimbursed for real and necessary expenses incurred while conducting official duties as members of the task force.

Within 60 days after the bill takes effect, the state superintendent would have to call the task force's first meeting, at which the task force would elect from among its members a chairperson and any other necessary officers. After the first meeting, the task force would meet at times and places specified by the chairperson or a majority of its members.

MDE, EGLE, DNR, and MDARD would have to assist the Environmental Literacy Task Force in the performance of its official duties and functions, including providing it with advice and information that is not protected as confidential under applicable law.

The Environmental Literacy Task Force would be required to do all of the following:

- Develop an environmental literacy model curriculum designed to accomplish the following goals:
  - Prepare students for understanding and addressing environmental challenges of Michigan and the United States, including the relationship of the environment to national security, energy sources, climate change, health risks, and natural disasters.
  - Contribute to students' healthy lifestyles by making outdoor experiences part of the regular school curriculum and creating programs that promote healthy lifestyles through outdoor recreation and proper nutrition.
  - Create opportunities for enhanced and ongoing professional development of teachers that improves their knowledge of environmental issues and teaching skills related to those issues in settings inside and outside of the classroom.
  - Recommend improvements to existing environmental curricula, including the Michigan environmental education curriculum support, Michigan environmental literacy plan, and next generation science standards. The Environmental Literacy Task Force would have to assess the extent to which the existing curricula are implemented in this state, address environmental literacy, and meet literacy goals.
  - Teach students about twenty-first century jobs, growing industries, and ways to protect and improve the environment by including in the model curriculum instruction on alternative energy, renewable fuels, material science, energy-saving technology, low-impact development, and buildings certified in leadership in energy and environmental design (LEED) or buildings meeting a substantially similar standard.
- Identify and make recommendations on all of the following to achieve the goals of the environmental literacy model curriculum:
  - Applicable academic content standards, content areas, and courses or subjects.

- The relationship between the environmental literacy model curriculum and high school graduation requirements.
- Standards used by MDE to measure the environmental literacy of students.
- Professional development programs that improve teachers' knowledge of environmental issues and teaching skills relating to those issues in settings inside and outside of the classroom.
- Definitions for key terms that must be addressed in the environmental literacy model curriculum, including the terms environmental literacy, climate change, and healthy lifestyle.
- How to implement the environmental literacy model curriculum, including recommendations regarding funding sources and other necessary supports.
- How to encourage educational agencies and schools to participate in programs that do the following:
  - Improve teachers' knowledge of environmental issues and teaching skills relating to those issues in settings inside and outside of the classroom.
  - Treat the development of teachers' environmental knowledge and related teaching skills as a career-long process that encourages teachers' intellectual growth and teaching proficiency regarding environmental issues.
  - Develop a teacher training curriculum that focuses on environmental education and is aligned with applicable academic content standards.
  - Allow students to directly experience the outdoors by providing environmental education experiences that are based on outdoor activities and that use outdoor facilities.
  - Incorporate field-based learning, place-based learning, service learning, outdoor learning, or experimental learning.
  - Integrate environmental education into the curriculum by training teachers and administrators how to use field-based learning, place-based learning, service learning, outdoor learning, and experimental learning and by encouraging and supporting teachers to use the training in the curriculum.
  - Provide activities and programs that advance environmental education, including interdisciplinary courses that integrate the study of natural, social, and economic systems and the use of the environment as an integrating theme for a school curriculum.
- Seek input from a variety of sources to develop the environmental literacy model curriculum to ensure that the curriculum is based on equally weighted viewpoints in furtherance of critical thinking and analysis regarding environmental literacy.

By one year after the effective date of the bill, the task force would have to submit a report to the standing committees of the legislature responsible for K-to-12 education legislation.

The report would have to include the environmental literacy model curriculum and any other information identified by the task force and could include recommendations for legislation regarding the environmental literacy model curriculum.

Before submitting the report to the standing committees, the task force would have to provide public notice of the environmental literacy model curriculum and offer an opportunity for public comment during a 30-day period. In addition, the task force would have to provide individual notice of the model curriculum and the 30-day public comment period to nonprofit organizations and local parks and recreation associations that advance environmental education in Michigan and any other interested person involved in forming or implementing policies regarding education, business, or the environment, as determined by the task force. After the 30-day public comment period, but before submitting the report, the task force would then modify the environmental literacy model curriculum and any information identified and recommendations based on public comments received.

The bill would take effect 90 days after the date it is enacted into law.

Proposed MCL 380.1159

#### **FISCAL IMPACT:**

House Bill 4961 would increase costs for the state and have no fiscal impact on school districts, intermediate school districts (ISDs), and public school academies (PSAs).

MDE has noted that meeting new requirements under the bill, including providing staffing and support for the task force, would require 1.0 FTE and \$150,000. There is currently no specific appropriation to the department for these responsibilities. The bill also requires MDE, EGLE, DNR, and MDARD to provide advice and information to the task force. Costs associated with this requirement would likely be absorbed using existing staff time.

The bill allows, but does not require, reimbursement for the participation expenses of task force members, which may further increase costs to the state. Members are not otherwise compensated for their participation in the task force. There is currently no appropriation in the state budget for this purpose.

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