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LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE
BILL ANALYSIS
53rd Legislature, 1st Session, 2017

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|------------------------|---|----------------------------|----------------------|
| Bill Number | <u>HB498/aHEC</u> | Sponsor | <u>Baldonado</u> |
| Tracking Number | <u>.207096.3</u> | Committee Referrals | <u>HEC; SEC/SPAC</u> |
| Short Title | <u>Allow Early High School Graduation</u> | | |
| Analyst | <u>Terrazas</u> | Original Date | <u>2/24/17</u> |
| | | Last Updated | <u>3/9/17</u> |

BILL SUMMARY

Synopsis of HEC Amendment

The House Education Committee amendment to HB498 allows high school students, with parent permission, to graduate early from high school with a diploma of excellence, including a state seal of bilingualism-biliteracy, if the student (1) scores in the top 20 percentile of the ACT, SAT, or armed services vocational aptitude battery (ASVAB); (2) obtains a cut-score approved by the Public Education Department (PED) on an academic or technical and vocational assessment approved by PED; or (3) obtains a PED-approved industry-recognized credential. No later than October 1 of the school year in which the student wishes to graduate early, the student must notify the high school in writing, including the parent's signature, of the student's intent to graduate early. The student must meet with the student's parent and principal, and any other relevant school personnel, to be advised of any known consequences related to early graduation.

A student in grade 9, 10, or 11, who meets these conditions, must finish the school year in which the student is enrolled and would receive the diploma of excellence upon completion of that school year. A student in grade 12 who meets these conditions before the end of the first semester of the school year would receive a diploma of excellence upon completion of that semester and would not need to complete the second semester.

Synopsis of Original Bill

House Bill 498 (HB498) allows high school students to graduate early from high school with a diploma of excellence by testing out with a certain score on the ACT, SAT, ASVAB, or an assessment approved by PED.

FISCAL IMPACT

HB498/aHEC does not contain an appropriation.

SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

The ACT and SAT are nationally administered standardized tests that help most colleges and universities evaluate candidates. In general, both tests try to measure college readiness and predict future academic success in different ways. The ACT measures what a student already knows; what a student should have learned during high school. The SAT measures what a student is capable of learning and, therefore, includes material that a student may not have learned in high school. There are no independent research studies that indicate how well the most recent versions of the ACT or SAT align with the Common Core State Standards.

Most colleges and universities use the ACT and SAT scores interchangeably. Many use them as factors to make admissions decisions and some use them to award scholarships. While some students take both assessments to increase their admissions chances, others choose to take the assessment they believe is more appropriate for their postsecondary plans. Attachment A provides a more detailed overview of each test.

ACT in New Mexico. In 2016, 13,435 students took the ACT. It is scored on a scale of 1 to 36. The average score was 19.9, which has not changed since 2012, with the exception of 2015 when the average was 20.1. The national average score was 20.8.

SAT in New Mexico. In 2016, 1,842 students took the SAT. It is scored on a scale of 400 to 1600. The average SAT score was 1098. The national average was 1002.

As mentioned, many colleges and universities use the ACT and SAT as a factor to make admissions decisions, including those in New Mexico. In addition to other requirements, New Mexico State University allows students to use ACT or SAT scores in lieu of their grade point average (GPA) and their high school percentile rank. Students not seeking provisional admission must receive an ACT composite score of 21 or an SAT score of 1060. The University of New Mexico does not require a minimum score on the ACT or SAT, but still requires students to submit their score for either test with their admission application. Other schools that require either the ACT or SAT score include New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology, Eastern New Mexico University, and Western New Mexico University.

ASVAB. The ASVAB is a multiple choice test developed and maintained by the Department of Defense that measures knowledge and ability. Four domains are assessed: Arithmetic Reasoning, Word Knowledge, Paragraph Comprehension, and Mathematics Knowledge. The ASVAB produces several scores. According to the US Army, the most important ASVAB score is the Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT) score, which helps determine the military occupational specialty for which individuals qualify. The AFQT score is a percentile score derived from four subtests (see Attachment A). The score is compared to 12 thousand individuals, ranging in age from 18 to 23, who took the ASVAB in 1997. For example, an AFQT score of 70 means the test-taker scored as well or better than 70 percent of the 12 thousand individuals. To be considered for enlistment in the Army, a test-taker would need a minimum score of 31. It is not required for a test-taker with a qualifying score to enlist in the armed forces.

Studies have shown that students who have strong GPAs in high school are likely to do well in college even if their standardized test scores are poor. The National Education Association (NEA) reports that multiple measures, such as students' GPA and noncognitive skills, are stronger indicators of student success than simply looking at standardized test scores. A 2014

study conducted by William C. Hiss and Valerie W. Franks showed that university students with stronger high school GPAs graduated from college at higher rates than students with weaker high school GPAs but much stronger test scores. NEA explains that GPA shows both mastery of content knowledge and skills not usually captured in test scores, such as self-control and grit. Self-control and grit are examples of noncognitive skills; skills often referred to as “social and emotional learning” or “soft skills.”

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

PED would need to determine what other assessment could be used to graduate early from high school and identify an appropriate cut score.

TECHNICAL ISSUES

Individuals who take the ASVAB receive several scores, two of which are used by all the service branches, the verbal expression score and the AFQT score. The sponsor may want to clarify which score on the ASVAB would be used.

OTHER SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

Students in New Mexico have a couple of options to get a head start on their college or career aspirations. Students who graduate from Early College High Schools receive a high school diploma and a college-level associate degree, or up to two years of college credit toward a bachelor’s degree. Further, high school students have the opportunity to enroll in college courses through the dual credit program.

ALTERNATIVES

Given the research on strong indicators of future student success, the sponsor may want to consider allowing high school students to graduate early by looking at their GPA, in addition to their standardized test scores.

Other states have approached early high school graduation in different ways. Connecticut, for example, in addition to adding certain online courses and credit-recovery options as alternatives to more traditional learning pathways, allows students who elect to graduate early to complete a series of examinations to satisfy graduation requirements and demonstrate mastery of state-required learning standards. Maine allows students to demonstrate achievement of state standards through multiple ways, including portfolios, performances, exhibitions, and projects. The sponsor may wish to consider looking into other measures to determine if high school students are ready to graduate early.

The sponsor may wish to include the ACT WorkKeys as an assessment that measures both “hard skills” and “soft skills.”

Another alternative would be to allow students to test out of required courses by passing end-of-course exams prior to enrollment in courses.

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

What are comprehensive effective measures that can be used to determine if and when students are ready to graduate early from high school?

Should the threshold for early graduation be based on percentiles or scores?

RELATED BILLS

Relates to HB303, Life Skills as Graduation Requirement, which makes changes to the mathematics, life skills, and elective requirements.

Relates to SB219/SECS/aSEC, Define & Require School Ethnic Studies, which requires ethnic studies courses in grades 4 through 12 by removing one-half of a unit from the required elective units and assigning the one-half unit to social science requirements.

Relates to SB31, Remove Certain Graduation Requirements, which removes the requirement for students entering ninth grade after the 2016-2017 school year to take at least one advanced placement, honors, dual-credit, or distance learning course for high school graduation.

Relates to SB134/SECS, Computer Science for School Graduation, which allows students to substitute a computer science unit for either a mathematics or a science unit.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- LESC Files

DT/rab

| ACT, SAT, and ASVAB Comparison | | | |
|--------------------------------|---|--|--|
| | ACT | SAT | ASVAB |
| Test Structure | English Math Reading Science Reasoning Essay Optional | Reading Writing & Language Math Essay Optional | Domains: • Verbal • Math • Science & Technical • Spatial |
| Length | 2 hours 55 minutes without essay 3 hours 40 minutes with essay | 3 hours without essay 3 hours 50 minutes with essay | 2 hour 34 minutes on the computer 2 hours 29 minutes paper & pencil |
| Content | Reading | 4 reading passages | 5 reading passages |
| | Science | 1 science section testing critical thinking skills, not specific science knowledge | None |
| | Math | Covers: • Arithmetic • Algebra I & II • Geometry and Trigonometry | Covers: • Arithmetic • Algebra I & II • Geometry, Trigonometry, and Data Analysis |
| | Calculator Policy | You can use a calculator on all math questions | Some math questions do not allow you to use a calculator |
| | Essays | Optional. The essay tests how well students evaluate and analyze complex issues. | Optional. The essay tests comprehension of a source text. |
| | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Science • Arithmetic Reasoning • Word Knowledge • Paragraph Comprehension • Mathematics Knowledge • Electronics Information • Auto Information • Shop Information • Mechanical Comprehension • Assembling Objects |
| | | | AFQT* score derived from tests in bold. |
| How It's Scored | Scored on a scale of 1-36 | Scored on a scale of 400-1600 | The AFQT* score is a percentile score |
| 2017 Test Dates | February 11 April 8 June 10 | January 21 March 11 May 6 June 3 | Register at any time. |
| Registration Fee | With essay | \$58.50 | \$57.00 |
| | Without essay | \$45.00 | \$42.50 |
| | | | No fee |

*Armed Forces Qualification Test