Bill would block public access to teacher records

A bill in the state House of Representatives could restrict the public's right to see the personnel filed records of state employees, including school teachers and principals.

House Bill 5616 was voted out of the local government committee, 6-0 Tuesday, If passed, it would prevent the public from gaining access to the personnel files of all public employees.

The bill, sponsored by Reg. Bob Brackenridge, RSt. Joseph, is an attempt to amend the Michigan Freedom of Information Act and stop access to the

tion Act and stop access to the personnel and medical records of

personnel and medical records of rublic employees.

The Michigan Education Association, the Michigan Chamber of Commerce and the Michigan Association of School Boards support the bill.

Dawn Cooper, the director of communications for the Michigan Education Association said public employees should benefit from the same rights as those

Oakland legislator expresses concerns

During the House local govern-During the House local govern-ment committee meeting on HB 5615, state Rep. Penny Criss-man, R-Rochester abstained from voting. Crissman said she has unan-

"I have always been a supporter of the Freedom of Information Act," she said.

Crissman supports the idea

Crissman supports the iden that information about public omplayees, paid with tax dollars, about be available for public view. But she says the bill is too vigue in its explanation of personnel file information. "What does personnel records mean?" she said. "It really is too broad to me and if I can't get some resolution, I probably won't support it."

OU to open on-campus copy center

Oakland University this summer will open a mail and photocopy center for students, faculty and campus visitors.

The center, on the upper level of Oakland Center, is expected to open in July. It will provide self-service and staff-assisted photocopying, color copies and services such as binding, lamination, faxing, packaging, stamps and notary. United Parcel Service, Federal Express shipping and campus wide courier service will also be available.

The center will serve as a

iso be available.

The center will serve as a trop-off site for university mail. Self-service copiers and stamp machines will be accessible after

nours.

"The Copy and Mail Satellite is the university's response to student groups," said Sue Smith, director of university services.
"We want to become more director of university services.

We want to become more
involved with our students and
have a stronger feeling of being
an important member of the unidensity community.

The project, partially funded

As important memor of the university community."
The project, partially funded by \$50,000 from the university's Strategic Plan Fund and Technology Fund, is among 15 1997-93 initiatives to advance the OU atrategic plan. Other projects include the acquisition of a molecular modeling DNA fequencer; a system to expand on-line access to books, periodicals and other resources at Kresega Library; UNIX workstations in the School of Engineering and Computer Science; and a technology equipment upgrade in 13 chaserooms.

Find out who's ahead - See sports, Section C

working in the private sector.

"We believe all public employees have a right to privacy in their personal file," she said.

"The personal file is meant to be a positive receptacle. It's between the supervisor and employee. Evaluations are meant to be positive."

Cooper said once the file is available for public scrutiny, it is no longer a positive device.

"I understand that there's a balancing act, and we certainly

understand that parents want the best for their children, but it seems to give us less rights, she said.

Rep. Greg Kaza, R-Rochester Hills, opposes the bill. He calls it an attack on the public's right to know.

"The bill argues that the information is somehow invading privacy," Kaza said, adding that the bill is a move away from an open government. "There's a conflict between privacy and the public's

right to know.

In government, we need to make more information available to the public."

Organizations such as the Michigan Preedom of Information Committee also oppose the legislation.

Tim Richard, board member of the Michigan Freedom of Information Committee, and the bill is nimed at reversing the Michigan Supreme Court Decision in.

Bradley v. Saranac Community Schools, a case in which the Court favored the release of a teacher's job performance records to parents.

"Valuable information of a public safety nature would be covered up if the bill passes," Richard said. "Schools would be able to hide records and the public would be poorly served." The committee, founded in 1988, aims to inform the public to the country of th

1988, aims to inform the public about the Open Meetings and

Freedom of Information Acts. In a memorandum to the House Committee on Local Government.

The committee expresses concern that the proposed exemption of personnel files could prevent parents from finding out where his or her child's teacher went to college, whether the teacher is certified, and where the teacher previously worked. tencher is certified, and where the teacher previously worked. Salary schedules would also be

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