

HB 745 -- HIGHER EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIPS

SPONSOR: Thomson

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Committee on Higher Education by a vote of 13 to 0.

This bill adds identical provisions to the A+ Program, the higher education academic scholarship, commonly known as "Bright Flight," and Access Missouri that require, for those graduating from high school during the 2016-17 academic year and after:

(1) An applicant to achieve a score of proficient or advanced on the algebra I end-of-course assessment or on a higher level of mathematics end-of-course assessment approved by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, or a qualifying score established each year by the Coordinating Board for Higher Education within the Department of Higher Education on the ACT COMPASS exam or the math component of the ACT except for a student who is enrolling in a certificate program;

(2) An applicant to achieve a score of proficient or advanced on the English I end-of-course assessment or on a higher level of English end-of-course assessment approved by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, or a qualifying score established each year by the Coordinating Board for Higher Education within the Department of Higher Education on the ACT COMPASS exam or the English component of the ACT except for a student who is enrolling in a certificate program; and

(3) A recipient, beginning with the 2014-15 academic year for Access Missouri, to complete 24 semester hours each year in order to renew an award.

The bill also allows an eligible student who is unable to enroll or has stopped attending because of illness or other medical need or to serve a nonprofit organization, government agency, or in the armed forces, to undertake or renew an A+ or Access Missouri award within time periods specified by the bill.

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education must provide guidance to school districts about allowing a student to retake the end-of-course assessments, including information about practices that have increased a student's chances of successfully achieving a higher score.

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that the longer a student takes to finish a degree, the lower his or her chances of completing it. The bill helps put a floor for academic performance under those who

pursue associate and higher degrees.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Thomson; and University of Central Missouri.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.

OTHERS: Others testifying on the bill say that community colleges support the completion agenda but prefer to leave the definition of satisfactory academic progress to each institution rather than adopt the 24-hour provision. The Coordinating Board for Higher Education has not yet taken a stand on the bill, but the department hopes it will help lower the remediation rate.

Testifying on the bill were Missouri Community College Association; and Department of Higher Education.