

HB 1066 -- EDUCATIONAL SAVINGS ACCOUNTS

SPONSOR: Grisamore

This bill authorizes the establishment of an educational savings account, known as a Missouri empowerment account, as an option for the education of a student with a specified disability.

To enroll a qualified student for an empowerment account, the parent of a qualified student must sign an agreement that contains specified requirements. In exchange for the parent's agreement, the state must deposit into an empowerment account an amount that is equivalent to 90% of the amount of state aid that otherwise would be computed for the student, including consideration of all state funding weights. The empowerment account must be renewed by a parent on an annual basis.

The bill specifies that a signed agreement constitutes school attendance as required by statute. A qualified school or provider of services purchased under these provisions is prohibited from sharing, refunding, or rebating any empowerment account funds with the parent or qualified student in any manner.

The Department of Revenue must contract with private financial management firms to manage empowerment accounts with the supervision of the department. The department must conduct or contract for annual audits of a random sample of empowerment accounts to ensure compliance with the provisions of the bill and is authorized to remove any parent or qualified student from eligibility for an empowerment account if the parent misuses the funds in the account. A parent may appeal the department's decision. The department is authorized to refer cases for misuse of funds to the Attorney General for investigation if the department obtains evidence of fraudulent use of an account.

The department may deduct up to 3% of the amount of student state aid from each empowerment account each year for the department's administrative costs account.

The department must make quarterly transfers of the amount calculated as specified in the bill to the empowerment account of each qualified student.

The bill specifies that these provisions do not permit any government agency to exercise control or supervision over any private school or home school. A qualified student that accepts a payment from a parent under these provisions is not an agent of the state or federal government. A qualified school cannot be required to alter its creed, practices, admissions policy, or curriculum in

order to accept students whose parents pay tuition or fees from an empowerment account in order to participate as a qualified school.