

HCS HB 1389 -- RECIPROCITY FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION

SPONSOR: Thomson

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass by Consent" by the Committee on Higher Education by a vote of 11 to 0.

This bill makes the Coordinating Board for Higher Education responsible for entering agreements for interstate reciprocity regarding the delivery of postsecondary distance education. The Coordinating Board will have responsibility for approving or disapproving applications from postsecondary education institutions with their principal campus located in Missouri to participate in such agreements.

The Coordinating Board must establish standards for institutional approval, including a definition of physical presence for non-Missouri institutions serving Missouri residents consistent with other states' definition of physical presence; establishment of consumer protection policies for distance education addressing recruitment, marketing activities, disclosure of tuition, fees, admission processes and procedures; and student complaints. The Coordinating Board must establish policies for the review and resolution of student complaints.

The Coordinating Board may charge fees to any institution applying to participate in an interstate reciprocity agreement. Fees cannot exceed the Coordinating Board's cost of reviewing and evaluating the applications.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that the bill should make the approval process for virtual education more streamlined and much less expensive. This bill flips the process so that each state certifies its outgoing courses rather than having to apply for approval at every receiving institution in another state. It does not affect course content.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Thomson; Leroy Wade, Deputy Commissioner, Department of Higher Education; Jenny Parks, Midwest Higher Education Commission; and University of Phoenix.

OPPOSERS: Those who oppose the bill say that people don't need to be protected from colleges in this way.

Testifying against the bill was Mary McKenna.