

HB 1577 -- STUDENTS IN FOSTER CARE

SPONSOR: Largent

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "do pass by consent" by the Committee on Judiciary by a vote of 14 to 0.

This bill requires the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to ensure that specified criteria are implemented in every school district regarding the enrollment and educational success of foster care children.

If a foster care student transfers before or during the school year, the receiving school must initially honor placement of the student in educational courses and programs based on the student's previous enrollment or educational assessments from the sending school and provide comparable services to a foster care student with disabilities based on his or her current Individualized Education Program.

Schools may waive specific course or program prerequisites and must waive specific courses required for graduation if similar course work has been satisfactorily completed at another school or provide reasonable justification for the denial. If a waiver is not granted, the receiving school must provide an alternative means of acquiring the required course work so that graduation may occur on time. If a foster care student who transfers at the beginning of or during his or her senior year is ineligible to graduate from the receiving school after all alternatives specified in the bill have been considered, the sending and receiving schools must ensure the student receives a diploma from the sending school if the student meets the graduation requirements of the sending school.

FISCAL NOTE: No impact on state funds in FY 2013, FY 2014, and FY 2015.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that the bill tries to remove educational barriers for foster children who often have to move between different school districts and gives school districts more flexibility in giving children credit for classes and requirements that vary between school districts.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Largent; Kevin Drollinger, Epworth Children and Family Services and Missouri Child Care Association; Great Circle; Missouri National Education Association; and Carolyn Swanigan, Office of the Child Advocate.

OPPOSERS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.