

HB 550 -- CHARTER SCHOOLS

SPONSOR: Wood

This bill changes the laws relating to charter schools. In its main provisions, the bill:

(1) Adds to provisions relating to contracts between charter schools and their sponsors the requirement that performance consequences are aligned with annual performance report evaluations of public schools (Section 160.400, RSMo);

(2) Adds to the requirement that charter school sponsors develop policies and procedures for a performance contract and requires charter schools to meet current state academic performance standards as well as other standards agreed upon by the sponsor and the charter school in the contract (Section 160.400);

(3) Specifies that when a sponsor notifies a charter school of closure, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education must withhold funds to assure all obligations of the charter school are met. The state, charter sponsor, or resident are not liable for any outstanding liability or obligations of the charter school (Section 160.400);

(4) Repeals provisions prohibiting an eligible sponsor that is not currently sponsoring a charter school as of August 28, 2012 from commencing charter sponsorship without approval from and a sponsor contract with the State Board of Education (Section 160.403);

(5) Specifies that a designated trustee will be responsible for the disposition of all assets in the event of a dissolution (Section 160.405);

(6) Requires the State Board of Education to approve a charter by January 31 prior to the school year that is the proposed opening date of the charter school. Currently, the State Board of Education must approve a charter by December 1 of the year prior to the proposed opening date of the charter school (Section 160.405);

(7) Requires the sponsor to prepare the statement of finding that the application meets statutory requirements which is currently required when a sponsor approves a charter and submits the application to the State Board of Education (Section 160.405);

(8) Requires the State Board of Education to approve or disapprove a charter application within 60 days of its receipt. Any charter application received on or before November 15 of the year prior to the proposed opening of the charter school must be considered by

the State Board within 60 days. At the end of 60 days, the charter application will be deemed approved unless the State Board disapproves it on the grounds that it fails to meet statutory requirements or the sponsor has previously failed to meet the statutory responsibilities of a sponsor. If the State Board disapproves a charter application, it must do so in writing and identify the specific failures of the application to meet statutory requirements. The written disapproval must be provided to the sponsor within 10 business days (Section 160.405);

(9) Provides that a charter school with an annual performance report consistent with a classification of accredited for three of the last four years and is fiscally viable may have an expedited renewal process (Section 160.405);

(10) Requires the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to calculate an annual performance report for each charter school and must publish it in the same manner as they are calculated and published for districts and attendance centers (Section 160.405);

(11) Requires the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to create a committee, comprised of equal members of the charter school sector and public school sector, to investigate facility access and affordability for charter schools and to report the findings to the General Assembly by December 31, 2015 (Section 160.405);

(12) Allows high quality charter schools, as defined in the bill, to be provided expedited opportunities to replicate and expand, subject to specified conditions, into unaccredited districts, the St. Louis City School District, and the Kansas City School District (Section 160.408);

(13) Requires charter schools to enroll nonresident pupils who have at least one parent employed by the charter school unless the pupil's enrollment would cause a resident student to be denied enrollment (Section 160.410);

(14) Prohibits lottery system discrimination based on parents' ability to pay fees or tuition (Section 160.410);

(15) Specifies that students who have been enrolled in a charter school for a full academic year must be counted in the performance of that school on the statewide assessments of that year. Currently, students who are present for the January membership are counted in the performance (Section 160.410); and

(16) Defines "full academic year" for purposes of these provisions (Section 160.410).