

HCS HB 1254 -- ACCESS MISSOURI FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

SPONSOR: Lichtenegger

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with Amendments" by the Standing Committee on Higher Education by a vote of 11 to 0 with 1 present. Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Select Committee on Education by a vote of 9 to 0.

This bill adds approved virtual institutions to the Access Missouri Financial Assistance Program that are recognized as a qualifying institution by a gubernatorial executive order issued before August 28, 2015 and through a memorandum of understanding between the State of Missouri and the approved virtual institution.

An approved virtual institution must be organized as a nonprofit institution; accredited by a regional accrediting agency recognized by the United States Department of Education; have established and continuously maintained a physical campus or location of operation in Missouri; maintain at least 25 full-time Missouri employees, at least half of which must be faculty or administrators engaged in Missouri operations; enroll at least 1000 Missouri residents as degree or certificate seeking students; and maintain a governing body or advisory board based in Missouri with oversight of Missouri operations.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that this bill provides more educational opportunities for Missouri students.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Lichtenegger; Leroy Wade, Deputy Commissioner, Missouri Department of Higher Education; Angie Besendorfer, Western Governor's University; and Rebecca Collins-Squibb.

OPPOSERS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.

OTHERS: Others testifying on the bill say the bill expands scholarship programs that are currently underfunded and there is opposition to a department rule that would allow out-of-state institutions access to funds.

Testifying on the bill were Paul Wagner, Council On Public Higher Education In Missouri and Independent Colleges And Universities Of Missouri.