

HB 1611 -- GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING PROGRAMS

SPONSOR: Swan

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Elementary and Secondary Education by a vote of 13 to 0. Voted "Do Pass" by the Select Committee on Education by a vote of 10 to 0.

Beginning with the 2016-17 school year, this bill permits a school board or local education agency of a charter school to establish an academic and career counseling program in cooperation with parents and the local community that is in the best interest of and meets the needs of the students in the community. School districts and local education agencies may use the Missouri Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Program as a resource for the development of a district or Local Educational Agency (LEA) program.

The bill requires the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to develop a process for recognition of a school district's academic and career counseling program established with parents and the local community, no later than January 1, 2017.

This bill is similar to HB 382 (2015).

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that schools with comprehensive counseling programs are more beneficial for children than those without one. School counselors are usually the first line for any kids that are having problems at home. A comprehensive program can help determine if a child needs access to mental health resources outside of school. School counselors are able to positively influence 100% of the student population. Comprehensive counseling programs help to decrease overlooked issues that can affect positive growth. The goal of school counselors is to guide every child through the many transitions of school life.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Swan; Linda Gillman, Missouri School Counselor Association; Missouri National Education Association; Missouri Association for Career and Technical Education; Karen Bader; and Jamie McHale.

OPPOSERS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.