

HB 1716 -- VIRTUAL EDUCATION

SPONSOR: Lichtenegger

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Higher Education by a vote of 12 to 0 and 1 present. Voted "Do Pass" by the Select Committee on Education by a vote of 10 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, 2016 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.

This bill is similar to HCS HB 1254 (2015).

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that virtual institutions can make the process of earning a degree more financially feasible, logistically easier, and practically possible for many people that would otherwise not have a chance to receive an education. It makes sense to provide support for students that qualify for Access Missouri so they can attend virtual institutions.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Lichtenegger; Missouri Department Of Higher Education; Angie Besendorfer, Western Governor's University- Missouri; and Amanda Smith.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.