

HCS HB 924 -- CHARTER SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY

SPONSOR: Razer

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Standing Committee on Elementary and Secondary Education by a vote of 7 to 6.

This bill changes provisions relating to charter schools.

The bill limits a sponsor of a charter school that fails to receive renewal of its charter after the three-year term shall not sponsor any new charter schools until the State Board of Education has determined that the sponsor was in compliance for any charter school it sponsored at the time a charter school failed to receive renewal (Section 160.400).

The bill states that an underperforming school includes those in which the percentage of the charter school's students who perform proficient and advanced on the annual statewide system of assessments in English language arts and mathematics is lower than the average percentage of grade-level-equivalent students in district in which it is located who perform proficient and advanced in English language arts and mathematics.

A charter school is not considered underperforming if the average rate of growth in English language arts and mathematics on the annual statewide assessment is higher than the average rate of growth for grade-level-equivalent students in the school district or is comprised of high risk students of which 50% or more were previously considered dropouts (Section 160.404).

This bill allows a charter school to renew for a five-year term. Application for renewal shall include a financial audit performed by an independent third party and paid for by the charter district. If a charter school underperforms two of three years before renewal then any renewal granted shall be for only a three-year term. A charter may also be revoked for underperformance of two years.

The bill requires that charter schools include in their charter that they will seek to ensure that the percentage of its students who perform proficient and advanced on the annual statewide system of assessments in English and mathematics is equal to or higher than the average percentage of grade level-equivalent students attending attendance centers in the school district in which it is located (Section 160.405).

This bill defines "student mobility ratio" for districts as a calculation of the number of students enrolling or withdrawing for

reasons other than academic promotion over the total number of students.

This bill requires student mobility ratio to be calculated annually by Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and a study to be conducted and made available on the department website (Section 160.407).

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that school choice is an important issue and that this bill will address a few aspects of accountability for charter schools. The supporters state that the bill addresses the idea of student mobility in order to ensure that students aren't being "coached" out of a charter school.

Testifying for the bill was Representative Razer.

OPPOSERS: Those who oppose the bill say that accountability is important, however student mobility is not the right type of accountability, and that the true issue for charters is the backfilling issue when a charter does not maintain class size when students leave and the discrepancy between students in traditional public schools and those in charter schools.

Testifying against the bill were Missouri Association of School Administrators; and the Missouri School Board Association.

OTHERS: Others testifying on the bill say that DESE has failed to produce mobility data upon request and that this lack of transparency is a concern for both charter and school districts alike. Additionally, all school districts should have clear policy on mobile/transfer students, and that this should be a local governance issue, but that mobility data should be examined as this would be another tool in the toolkit that could help students succeed.

Testifying on the bill were Douglas Thaman, Missouri Charter Public School Association; Missouri National Education Association; Kansas City 33 School District; and St. Louis Public Schools.