

HCS HB 754 -- VIRTUAL SCHOOL PROGRAM

SPONSOR: Christofanelli

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Standing Committee on Elementary and Secondary Education by a vote of 11 to 6. Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Rules- Legislative Oversight by a vote of 6 to 3.

The following is a summary of the House Committee Substitute for HB 754.

Currently, for purposes of calculation and distribution of state school aid, all students enrolled in the Missouri Course Access and Virtual School Program (MCAVSP) shall be included in the student enrollment of the school district in which the student physically is enrolled.

This bill specifies that, full-time equivalent students shall not be included in the student enrollment of the school district in which such student resides and that scores on the statewide assessment for full-time equivalent students shall be attributed to the MCAVSP which will function as a local education agency. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) will pay 100% of its average per-pupil expenditure for each full-time equivalent student.

Currently, costs associated with such virtual courses are to be paid by the school district or charter school directly on a pro rata monthly basis based on a student's completion of assignments and assessments. The bill specifies that, costs shall be paid by the school district or charter school, or by DESE for full-time equivalent students, to the provider on a pro rata basis once per semester based on a student's completion of assignments and assessments.

Currently, school districts or charter schools are required to consider recommendations from DESE and evaluate the progress of enrolled students who are enrolled in any course or full-time virtual school, and may terminate or alter the course offering if it is found that the course or full-time virtual school is not meeting the educational needs of the students. The bill grants DESE the authority to terminate or alter the course offering for full-time equivalent students, and the responsibility of school districts and charter schools to monitor full-time student progress and success is now granted to the virtual school providers.

School districts or charter schools are required currently, to inform parents of their child's right to participate in the virtual

schools program. The bill specifies that, any school district or charter school that fails to notify parents of his or her child's right to participate in the program shall be subject to civil penalties in an amount equal to \$100 for each day such school district or charter school is in violation of this requirement, including reasonable attorney's fees.

This bill is similar to HCS HB 2491 (2020).

The following is a summary of the public testimony from the committee hearing. The testimony was based on the introduced version of the bill.

**PROPONENTS:** Supporters say that virtual education opportunities are an important part of the variety of choices a parent should have for providing the best education for their child. This bill allows parents to be the gatekeepers for the education choice rather than the district and provides a smoother transition from education in a "brick-and-mortar" environment to the virtual one.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Christofanelli; Julee Higginbotham; Julie Smith; Keith Berry; Lisa Smith; Lois Mustain; Nicholas Elmes, Children's Education Alliance of Missouri; Connection Academy; Stride; Joshua Schindler, Schindler Law Firm; and Steve Richards, Missouri Virtual Academy .

**OPPONENTS:** Those who oppose the bill say that there is a concern about virtual programs with a lack of accountability and very little oversight or standard structure.

Testifying against the bill were Dr. Daniel N. Clemens, North Kansas City School District; Keith Rabenberg; Missouri Nea; Arnie Dienoff; Springfield Public Schools; Matthew Michelson, Missouri State Teachers Association; and the Missouri Association of School Administrators.

Written testimony has been submitted for this bill. The full written testimony can be found under Testimony on the bill page on the House website.