

HCS HB 2211 -- EMPOWERMENT SCHOLARSHIP ACCOUNTS

SPONSOR: Hurlbert

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Standing Committee on Elementary and Secondary Education by a vote of 13 to 6.

The following is a summary of the House Committee Substitute for HB 2211.

This bill modifies the definition of "qualified student" to remove "home school students" from the definition as used for Sections 166.700 to 166.720, RSMo in relation to empowerment scholarship accounts and include an elementary or secondary school student who is a resident of any county with at least 100,000 inhabitants.

This will include the counties of Boone, Cass, Clay, Franklin, Greene, Jackson, Jasper, Jefferson, Platte, St. Charles, and St. Louis, upon enactment.

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

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that expansion of this program will benefit students that attend school districts in cities that qualify under the program but happen to live outside of city limits. The expansion of the program is warranted to provide opportunities for additional choice and school freedom.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Hurlbert; Cheri Pello; Eimee Cook; Lindi Williford; Andrew Donald Wells, No Left Turn in Education - Missouri; American Federation for Children; and John Potter.

OPPOSERS: Those who oppose the bill say that this language will hurt public schools and take much needed public funds and divert them to private and religious schools. Currently Missouri is ranked toward the bottom in public funding for schools and this bill will further erode the support for education. The program has not even begun to be implemented and this language expands it without any proof that the expansion is necessary.

Testifying against the bill were Matt, Missouri State Teachers Association; Tracy Tegethoff; Amanda Schmid; Blair Panzica; Eleanor Gund; Jenna Roberson; Jennifer Main; Jessica Risenhoover; Laura Burkhardt; Liz Rauls; Lynn Derienzo; Marissa Polzin; Nancy Copenhaver, League of Women Voters of Missouri; Missouri NEA;

Missouri Association of School Administrators; Terica Donnelly; Tom Ferri; Arnie C. Ac Dienoff; Christy Potthast; Kenneth Derienzo; Laura Deen; Christine Keller; Dava-Leigh Brush; and the Missouri State Teachers Association.

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.