

HB 242 -- MISSOURI EMPOWERMENT SCHOLARSHIP

SPONSOR: Hurlbert

This bill terminates the current voluntary tax credit provisions of the Missouri Empowerment Scholarship program on September 1, 2025, and requires that any tax credits benefit and all allowable activities be completed by July 1, 2024.

The bill creates the "Missouri Empowerment Scholarship Accounts Program" within Sections 166.700 to 166.720, RSMo, and modifies the current program language beginning July 1, 2024, by creating a board to oversee the program, expanding the program to any elementary or secondary school student in the state, and requiring that all qualified students receive a grant amount equal to the state adequacy target either in four payments or in a lump sum at the beginning of the school year.

The bill requires that awarded grant amounts be distributed by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education from money appropriated by the state for the program.

The bill establishes the "Missouri Empowerment Scholarship Accounts Board" within the Office of State Treasurer. The members are specified in the bill and include one member appointed by the President Pro Tem of the Senate, one member appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and three members appointed by the Governor. Duties of the Board are specified in the bill and include, but are not limited to, ensuring that participating students take the state achievement tests, an annual parent satisfaction survey, and reporting annual findings to the General Assembly beginning in the 2024-25 school year.

This bill contains a penalty provision for any person found to have used money intended for Missouri Empowerment Scholarship accounts for any purpose other than those allowed and set forth.