



Missouri House of Representatives

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Missouri Legislature Passes Education Reform Package

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. – The Missouri General Assembly has passed SB 727 and HB 2287, a combination of comprehensive education reform bills aimed at enhancing elementary and secondary education across the state.

SB 727, passed out of the House on Thursday, April 18th with a vote of 82-69, includes updates to the Missouri Empowerment Scholarship Accounts Program, which triples it in size, and adjusts minimum school term requirements, and efforts to boost literacy among elementary students through the Elementary Literacy Fund. The legislation hopes to encourage schools to adopt a five-day week schedule and expand options for homeschooling, providing more flexibility for families and students. Moreover, it expands the maximum amount of tax credits for the Missouri Empowerment Scholarship program, prioritizes scholarships for low-income students and those with learning disabilities, and doubles small school grants to offer crucial support to underserved institutions, all while offering more choices for families seeking alternatives to traditional district schools.

SB 727 increases funding for early childhood education to establish a strong foundation for future generations. It also prioritizes teacher welfare by including wage increases from \$25,000 to \$40,000, adds career ladder programs, and creates flexible incentives targeted to attract and retain top talent nationwide. In addition to these educational improvements, SB 727 addresses issues such as teacher certification, school board vacancies, and suicide prevention.

HB 2287 seeks to provide clarity by fixing language in the 2022 legislation that established Missouri's Course Access and Virtual School Program. HB 2287 addresses several aspects, such as calculating average daily attendance for full-time virtual students, providing state aid to host districts, allowing statewide open enrollment, establishing enrollment policies, accommodating students with disabilities through individualized education programs, and simplifying the enrollment process for parents or guardians. Furthermore, the bill permits host districts to contract with providers for necessary virtual education services.

The legislation was expanded in the Missouri Senate to include provisions aimed at providing cleanup and clarification measures associated with its companion education bill, SB 727. These changes

include the return of the transportation trigger, reconnecting funding for K-12 tax-credit scholarships to state aid for public schools' transportation. SB 727 had raised some concerns by the homeschool community, with worries that by including them in the private school scholarship program, their 2nd Amendment rights may be infringed. By passing HB 2287 as a companion bill along with SB 727, the legislature hopes to address those concerns and preserve home school educators' constitutional rights. The bill also exempts Warsaw School District from the four-day school week, as they were inadvertently caught up in that arrangement, and removes provisions related to private school certification of teachers.

With passage in both chambers of the Missouri Legislature, SB 727 and HB 2287 now head to the governor's desk, where they await his signature into law.

Representative Jon Patterson, a Republican, represents District 30, which includes parts of Lee's Summit. He was elected to his first two-year term in November of 2018. Rep. Patterson currently serves as Majority Floor Leader. For more information, please contact Rep. Patterson's office at 573-751-0907 or via email at Jonathan.Patterson@House.Mo.Gov.