

HCS HB 1939 -- PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT OPEN ENROLLMENT

SPONSOR: Cunningham, 86 (Hunter)

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "do pass" by the Committee on Elementary and Secondary Education by a vote of 8 to 6.

This substitute establishes a procedure to permit students to attend school in a district other than their district of residence, as of July 1, 2007. The parent or guardian must notify the sending and receiving school districts by January 15, except for good cause, of the intent to enroll the student in a district other than the district of residence. If there are more applicants than spaces available, a random method of selection must be used. Requests that miss the deadline without good cause and are denied can be appealed. The substitute contains a formula for the distribution of school funds for these students, limited to the lower of the per-pupil cost in either district. Open enrollment may also be used when a change of residence would otherwise be required due to the parents' or guardians' marital status or the child's adoption or placement in a substance abuse program, among other situations. Provisions concerning special education, transportation, sufficient classroom space, assignment of assessment scores, and enrollment procedures for suspended or expelled students are also included. The substitute clarifies how open enrollment affects small schools grants and court-ordered settlements and requires intradistrict transfers to be offered on the same principles of open seats and parental provision of transportation. Vocational-technical education, to the extent practical, will provide open enrollment.

FISCAL NOTE: No impact on state funds in FY 2007, FY 2008, and FY 2009.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that open enrollment works well in Iowa and Ohio. About 1% of students take advantage of it, more in rural than suburban or urban areas. Intradistrict transfers are fairly common in many Missouri districts, and interdistrict transfers can work on the same principles of available seats and having parents provide the transportation.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Hunter; Dr. Mark Hargens, Assistant Superintendent, St. Joseph School District; and Dr. Norm Ritter, Superintendent, Springfield R-XII District.

OPPOSERS: Those who oppose the bill say that especially in the case of special education students, the sending district needs more control over expenses. Calculation of class size and the effect on small schools receiving the grants under Senate Bill 287 need to be addressed. Mobility can disrupt learning.

Testifying against the bill were Missouri School Boards' Association; Missouri School Administrators Coalition; and

Missouri National Education Association.

OTHERS: Others testifying on the bill say that the tuition of high school students in K-8 districts needs to be addressed, as does transfers to, from, and within the Special School District of St. Louis County.

Others testifying on the bill was Missouri State Teachers Association.

Becky DeNeve, Senior Legislative Analyst