

HCS HB 556 -- DISABILITY HISTORY AND AWARENESS MONTH IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

SPONSOR: Grisamore

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "do pass by consent" by the Special Standing Committee on Disability Services by a vote of 9 to 0.

This substitute designates October as "Disability History and Awareness Month" in all public schools and requires each school board to annually provide instruction on the topic during the month that expands students' knowledge, understanding, and awareness of individuals with disabilities, the history of disability, and the disability rights movement. The instruction must be integrated into the existing school curriculum and may be delivered by qualified school personnel or knowledgeable guest speakers. The goals of the instruction are to include:

- (1) Instilling sensitivity, encouraging educational cultures that nurture safe and inclusive environments for students with disabilities in which bullying is discouraged and respect and appreciation for students with disabilities is encouraged;
- (2) An understanding that there are individuals with disabilities and they have the same rights and responsibilities as any other person;
- (3) A school community that includes students with disabilities and acknowledges their unique gifts, talents, and contributions; and
- (4) A society that has reaffirmed a local, state, and federal commitment to the full inclusion in society of and the equal opportunity for all individuals with disabilities.

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education must identify and adopt preliminary curriculum guidelines for school boards that incorporate these goals. Higher education institutions are encouraged to conduct and promote activities on their campuses that provide education, understanding, and awareness of individuals with disabilities.

FISCAL NOTE: No impact on state funds in FY 2012, FY 2013, and FY 2014.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that by building awareness, respect, and understanding in schools, there will be a significant decrease for the intolerance for persons with disabilities and an increase in respect and sensitivity. There are ample resources available to provide disability education with no additional cost

to school districts. The curriculum will empower students with enlightenment. Through education, young people will help to eliminate prejudices in the future and help eliminate bullying. The disabled community is a segment of American history that has been ignored for too long.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Grisamore; Susan Pritchard-Green, Missouri Planning Council for Developmental Disability; Michelle Krajewski, Missouri Centers for Independent Living; The Whole Person, Incorporated; Mental Retardation Association of Missouri; Greater St. Louis Parent Association; Bellefontaine Parent Association; Higginsville Parent Association; Girls Scouts of the Missouri Heartland, Incorporated; National Multiple Sclerosis Society; and Wayne Lee.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.