

HB 1819 -- Alternative Educational Arrangements for Charter Schools

Sponsor: Jones (63)

This bill specifies that a high risk or alternative charter school may allow a student to obtain credit to satisfy graduation requirements by providing alternative arrangements in the charter application and charter. Alternatives may include credit for off-campus instruction, performance-based credit, embedded credit, work experience, and independent studies. Upon charter approval by the State Board of Education within the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, any alternative arrangements must be approved at the same time. Performance standards for alternative and special purpose charter schools that target high-risk students must be based on measures defined in the school's charter. The department must conduct a study of any charter school granted alternative arrangements to assess student performance, graduation rates, educational outcomes, and entry into the workforce or higher education.

The bill also modifies the definition of "high risk" student by deleting characteristics that are primarily based on school outcomes and replacing them with behavioral traits and interaction with the court or corrections system. A charter school whose mission includes student dropout prevention or recovery may enroll any nonresident pupil who resides in a residential care facility, transitional living group home, or independent living program whose last school of enrollment is in the school district where the charter school is established. Preference must be given to resident pupils over nonresident pupils if there is insufficient capacity. A charter school may give an admission's preference to high-risk and dropout students.

A charter school may participate in the School Flex Program, which is expanded to include a student 17 to 21 years of age who has not obtained a high school degree and who meets the other program requirements. An eligible student who has been unable to obtain employment must provide evidence that he or she has been seeking employment to be eligible.