

HCS HB 1823 -- VIRTUAL SCHOOLS

SPONSOR: Berry

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Committee on Elementary and Secondary Education by a vote of 16 to 2.

This bill revises the law on virtual education. In its main provisions the bill:

- (1) Increases the reimbursement percentage from 94 to 95%;
- (2) Defines "virtual school of choice";
- (3) Allows students residing in and eligible to attend a public school in a county that has contained any portion of a school district that has been declared unaccredited or an adjacent county to enroll in a virtual school of choice;
- (4) Distinguishes between virtual resident and virtual transfer students;
- (5) Limits the admission of virtual transfer students by a virtual school of choice to the number by which the aggregate amount debited to the residence district would exceed the amount credited to the district under the equity portion of the foundation formula plus its Prop C and classroom trust fund moneys and limits admission overall to 2% of the state's enrollment;
- (6) Requires two payments, one at half of course completion and one upon completion;
- (7) Provides direction for funding when the state adequacy target used is different from the amount as calculated and for federal special education and Title I funding to follow the student;
- (8) Requires any clearinghouse of transfer information to provide information on virtual courses and programs.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that education has been slow to adopt technology in comparison with other sectors of society, partly because its funding is still tied to seat time, which is not a relevant concept for on-line self-paced learning. Virtual education started strong but fell behind during lean budget years.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Berry; Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry; Susan Stagner, Connections; K12, Inc.; Mike Brown; Kelsey Parrott; Children's Education Council of Missouri; and Missouri Education Reform Council.

OPPONENTS: Those who oppose the bill say that while everyone acknowledges the role of technology in education, funding and accountability are hard issues to resolve. Without a central coordinating agency, student guidance can be fragmented.

Testifying against the bill were Missouri School Boards Association; Association of School Administrators; and Missouri National Education Association.

OTHERS: Others testifying on the bill say the university has offered distance courses through its extension service since 1913, eventually going on-line in 1997.

Testifying on the bill was Christie Smalley, principal Mizzou on-line high school.