

HB 565 with HCA 1, HCA 2, HCA 3 and HCA 4 -- MISSOURI COURSE ACCESS PROGRAM

SPONSOR: Spencer

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with Amendments" by the Standing Committee on Elementary and Secondary Education by a vote of 12 to 0. Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Select Committee on Education by a vote of 8 to 2.

This bill establishes the Missouri Course Access Program. In its main provisions, the bill:

- (1) Specifies that the purpose of the program is to allow public school students to enroll in on-line, blended, and face-to-face courses to supplement coursework offered at the school where the student is enrolled;
- (2) Specifies that the program is separate and distinct from the Missouri Virtual Instruction Program established in Section 161.670, RSMo, and must not be considered part of the Missouri Virtual Instruction Program for any purpose;
- (3) Allows any eligible participating student with prior approval from his or her guidance counselor to enroll in state course access program courses;
- (4) Allows an eligible funded student to enroll in the program courses that are funded by the program up to a maximum of seven credit hours per semester;
- (5) Allows the families of eligible funded students and other eligible participating students to pay to enroll in state course access program courses above the levels specified in the provisions of the bill;
- (6) Allows the local education agency where eligible funded students are enrolled full time to review enrollment requests to ensure courses are academically appropriate, logistically feasible, keep the student on track for an on-time graduation, and do not extend a student beyond a full-time course load. The local education agency may only reject enrollment requests for those reasons;
- (7) Requires local education agencies to inform students and families of their right to appeal any enrollment denials in state course access program courses to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, which must provide a final enrollment decision within seven days;

(8) Requires the department to establish an authorization process for course providers that includes multiple opportunities for submission each year;

(9) Requires, no later than 90 days from the initial submission date, the department to authorize course providers that:

(a) Meet the criteria established under these provisions; and

(b) Provide courses which offer the instructional rigor and scope required under these provisions;

(10) Requires the department to provide a written explanation to any course provider that is denied authorization no later than 90 days from the initial submission date;

(11) Allows a course provider to reapply after an authorization denial;

(12) Requires the department to publish the process established under these provisions, including any deadlines and any guidelines applicable to the submission and authorization process for providers;

(13) Allows the department to charge applicant providers a fee up to but no greater than the amount of the costs in order to ensure that evaluation occurs if the department determines that there are insufficient funds available for evaluating and authorizing course providers;

(14) Requires the department to establish and publish a fee schedule for purposes of these provisions;

(15) Specifies what actions a provider must take to be authorized to offer a course through the program;

(16) Requires the department to develop additional criteria to evaluate providers and allows the department to include nationally recognized third-party quality standards;

(17) Requires the department to establish a course review and approval process which may be implemented by the department or by an entity designated by the department;

(18) Specifies the requirements in order for a course to be approved and added to the Missouri Course Access catalog;

(19) Allows the department to negotiate changes in the proposal to

offer a course if the department determines that changes are necessary in order to authorize the course;

(20) Specifies the authorization, review, probation, exclusion, and reauthorization processes for course providers;

(21) Allows the department to enter into a reciprocity agreement with other states for the purpose of authorizing and approving high quality providers and courses for the program and the operation of the catalog;

(22) Specifies the requirements for the department including publishing criteria; creating the catalog; publishing a link to the catalog on the department's website; establishing a time frame, including withdrawal dates; and maintaining an informed choice report on the website that includes specified information;

(23) Requires the department to submit an annual report on the program and the participation of entities to the Governor and the chairperson and vice-chairperson of the Joint Committee on Education that includes specified information. The report and underlying data must be published on-line in an open format;

(24) Requires school districts and charter schools to notify students and parents as part of any course enrollment period or process of the availability of program courses in correspondence that is written in simple and accurate language, provide information by letter or email to students and parents at home and by at least two other means, and publish information and eligibility guidelines on the school and school district's websites;

(25) Requires each local school system to establish policies and procedures for each eligible participating student regarding credit toward the requirements of any approved state diploma and the administration of required state assessments;

(26) Requires the performance data of students who are enrolled in a course under these provisions to be counted in the school performance score for the school in which the student is enrolled full time;

(27) Authorizes the department to adopt rules necessary to implement these provisions;

(28) Specifies the determinations for per-course tuition under the program;

(29) Clarifies that the funding mechanism for the program must be paid from the department to the local education agency and from the local education agency to the course provider only for courses in which a student is enrolled and any remaining funds must remain with the local education agency in which the student is enrolled full time; and

(30) Bases the payment of tuition to course providers upon student success and the tuition to be made on a specified ratio.

The provisions of the bill will expire six years from the effective date.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that the bill offers more educational opportunities for Missouri students and provides targeted assistance at the course level.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Spencer; Missouri National Education Association; Dave Lefkowitz, Assistant Superintendent, Louisiana Department Of Education; Maria Worthen, International Association for K-12 Online Learning; and Thomas Arnett, Clayton Christensen Institute.

OPPOSERS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.