

HCS HB 2565 & 2564 -- TRAUMA-INFORMED SCHOOLS INITIATIVE

SPONSOR: Montecillo

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Emerging Issues in Education by a vote of 10 to 0. Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Select Committee on Education by a vote of 9 to 0.

Beginning July 1, 2017, this bill establishes the "Trauma-Informed Schools Initiative." Accordingly, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education shall provide information regarding the trauma-informed approach to all school districts, and offer training on recognizing and responding to trauma.

This bill also establishes the "Trauma-Informed Schools Pilot Program." Under said program, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education shall choose five schools across Missouri to receive intensive trauma-informed training regarding how to recognize and respond to the signs of trauma in students, teachers, and staff. The program will be terminated on August 28, 2019, and before December 31, 2019 the department shall submit a report to the General Assembly on the results of the pilot program.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say this bill touches on a nationwide movement of trauma informed approaches. We have begun to understand how prevalent chronic stress is on both students and adults and the effects of such stress. Those children are much more likely to fail a grade and experience negative effects in regard to concentration, memory, and ability to calm or sooth themselves. Children have to feel safe to learn and teachers need to feel safe to teach. A lot of what this involves is integrating a certain set of practices and structure into what already exists by changing the question of "what is wrong with you?" to "what happened to you?" It's about very intentionally building a safe relationship between kids and adults. There are many kids who are constantly vigilant and never feel safe. This is something teachers are ready and willing to be a part of and can really make a difference. Students that don't have their personal needs met, and when those personal needs are of a greater desire than the desire to learn there are a lot of problems in the class room.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Montecillo; Gerald Cox; Missouri Kids First; Rachel Greathouse, Empower Missouri; Missouri Education Reform Council; Missouri National Education Association; Missouri Council Of School Administrators; and AFT St. Louis Local 420.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.