

HCS HB 581 -- CHARTER SCHOOLS

SPONSOR: Roeber

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Standing Committee on Elementary and Secondary Education by a vote of 8 to 5.

This bill changes provisions relating to charter schools.

The bill restricts a political subdivision from targeting a charter school with an ordinance or policy that limits the acquisition or use of property by a charter school or for educational purposes (Section 67.139, RSMo).

This bill expands where a charter school may be established to include;

- (1) Any county with a charter form of government;
- (2) Any city with a population greater than 30,000; or
- (3) Any school district accredited without provisions.

Currently, a charter school is authorized to operate in a school district that has been classified as provisionally accredited. This bill allows any school district to establish a charter school with community support, as long as the school board of the district approves and agrees to act as the sponsor.

If the school board denies a proposal, the charter school may appeal to the Missouri Charter Public School Commission which may approve and sponsor the charter school if sufficient community support exists.

The bill removes provisions relating to "workplace charter schools."

Any sponsor of a charter school that fails to receive renewal of its charter after the three-year term shall not sponsor any new charter schools until the State Board of Education has determined that the sponsor was in compliance for any charter school it sponsored at the time a charter school failed to receive renewal (Section 160.400).

If the charter school did not meet the standard set forth in the bill, any renewal granted shall be for only a three-year term. If the school again fails to meet the standard for two years of the three-year term, the school's charter shall not be renewed.

The bill adds language specifying when a sponsor may revoke a charter for clear evidence of failure to meet a standard in three out of four years. The standards do not apply to charters set up with 50% of students previously considered dropouts.

The added standards include requiring that the percentage of students performing proficient and advanced on the annual statewide assessment in English, language arts, and mathematics in the charter school is equal to or higher than the average percentage of grade-level-equivalent students attending public school in the same district or the average rate of growth in English, language arts, and mathematics on the annual statewide assessment is equal to or higher than the average rate of growth for grade-level-equivalent students attending public school in the same district.

Failure to meet the standards as specified in the bill for two years may result in a probationary status (Section 160.405).

This bill provides that a nonresident student may enroll in a charter school, but may not cause a resident student to be denied admission, and gives charter schools the option to give preference for admission to students eligible for free and reduced lunch.

The bill also specifies information that a charter school must publish on its website (Section 160.410).

This bill distinguishes the funding for a charter school that is not declared a local educational agency from those that are. The bill further changes the provisions regarding how state aid and tuition are determined for each, as specified in the bill (Section 160.415).

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that the charter school commission only approves quality applications that clearly demonstrate a vetted community support. School choices benefit all in society and allows for children to attend schools that meet their needs and can provide more individualized attention. Charter schools are innovative and this bill provides clear accountability measures that send a strong message.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Roeber; Bill Kent, The Bioms School; Carmen Ward; Cathy Jo Loy; Douglas Thaman, Missouri Charter Public School Association; Genevieve Alander; Kimberly Townsend; Nancy Jordan; Nelson O. Weber; Paul Covington; Robbyn Wattby, Missouri Charter Public School Commission; Ryan Tucker; Missouri Education Reform Council; Marcus C Robinson, The Opportunity Trust; Excellence in Education in Action; American Federation for Children; and the Missouri Chamber of Commerce and

Industry.

OPPONENTS: Those who oppose the bill say that removing students from public education impacts the overall district. Community support comes from locally elected board members and not charter sponsors that may not be from the area. Local control and the fiscal impact of charter school expansion may hurt public schools.

Testifying against the bill were Bill Nicely, Kearney School District; Linda Quinley, Missouri School Boards Association; Missouri State Teachers Association; Missouri National Education Association; American Federation of Teachers - Missouri; and School Administrators Coalition.