

HB 2491 -- VIRTUAL SCHOOL PROGRAM

SPONSOR: Christofanelli

Currently, for purposes of calculation and distribution of state school aid, all students enrolled in the Missouri Course Access and Virtual School Program shall be included in the student enrollment of the school district in which the student physically is enrolled. This bill specifies that, full-time equivalent students shall not be included in the student enrollment of the school district in which such student resides. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) shall pay any Missouri Course Access and Virtual School Program 100% of its average per-pupil expenditure for each full-time equivalent student.

Currently, a school district or charter school is required to allow any eligible student who resides in such district to enroll in Missouri Course Access and Virtual School Program courses if, prior to enrolling in any such course, a student has received approval from his or her school district or charter school. The bill allows, such student to enroll in virtual courses if the student has received approval from DESE.

DESE, rather than each school district or charter school, shall adopt a policy that delineates the process by which a student may enroll in courses provided by the Missouri Course Access and Virtual School Program.

If DESE denies a student's request to enroll in such a course, local education agencies shall inform the student and the student's family of their right to appeal any denial to the State Board of Education, rather than to the local school district board or charter school governing body.

Currently, if a school district or charter school denies a student's enrollment in a virtual course, such school shall provide its good cause justification for denial. Both the family and school administration shall also provide their reasons in writing to the members of the school board or governing body and the documents shall be entered into the official board minutes.

The bill specifies that, DESE shall provide its good cause justification for denying a student's enrollment in a virtual course. Both the family and DESE shall provide their reasons in writing to the State Board, and members of the State Board, rather than the school board or governing body, shall issue their decision in writing within 30 days. The bill repeals the provision allowing for an appeal to be made to DESE.

Currently, costs associated with such virtual courses are to be paid by the school district or charter school directly on a pro rata monthly basis based on a student's completion of assignments and assessments. The bill specifies that, costs shall be paid by the school district or charter school, or by DESE for full-time equivalent students, to the provider on a pro rata basis once per semester based on a student's completion of assignments and assessments.

Currently, school districts or charter schools are required to consider recommendations from DESE and evaluate the progress of enrolled students who are enrolled in any course or full-time virtual school, and may terminate or alter the course offering if it is found that the course or full-time virtual school is not meeting the educational needs of the students. The bill grants DESE the authority to terminate or alter the course offering for full-time equivalent students, and the responsibility of school districts and charter schools to monitor full-time student progress and success is repealed.

School districts or charter schools are required currently , to inform parents of their child's right to participate in the virtual schools program. The bill specifies that, any school district or charter school that fails to notify parents of his or her child's right to participate in the program shall be subject to civil penalties in an amount equal to \$100 for each day such school district or charter school is in violation of this requirement, including reasonable attorney's fees.

This bill is similar to SB 996 (2020).