

HCS HB 1275 -- VIRTUAL SCHOOLS

SPONSOR: Baker (123)

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "do pass" by the Special Committee on Student Achievement and Finance by a vote of 8 to 0.

This substitute requires the State Board of Education to establish a virtual school by July 1, 2007. Any student in kindergarten through grade 12 may enroll, regardless of where the student lives within the state. State school aid will treat the student as part of the enrollment of the district in which the student physically resides if the parent chooses. The virtual school will report aid-related data to the district of residence. A full-time equivalent student is one who completes six credits per regular term, and each virtual course counts as one class. The school district will retain 15% of state aid for enrollees under Section 163.031, RSMo, related to the funding formula and Section 163.043, related to the Classroom Trust Fund, attributable to the student; and the virtual school will receive 85% of the state adequacy target attributable to the student. The virtual school must comply with all laws applicable to school districts including the state accreditation program, adequate yearly progress, annual performance report, teacher certification, and curriculum standards.

FISCAL NOTE: Estimated Cost on General Revenue Fund of \$96,466 in FY 2007, \$102,146 to Unknown in FY 2008, and \$104,698 to Unknown in FY 2009. Subject to Appropriation. No impact on Other State Funds in FY 2007, FY 2008, and FY 2009.

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that a virtual school can provide opportunities for students who are hard to serve with a traditional classroom, whether the need is a specialized teacher in a small district or a homebound student. The framework letting the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education serve as both an access point for multiple providers and quality control equal to a school district provides flexibility.

Testifying for the bill were Representatives Baker (123) and Moore; Department of Elementary and Secondary Education; Missouri National Education Association; Missouri State Teachers Association; Missouri Federation of Teachers and School-Related Personnel; Missouri School Boards' Association; Missouri Rural Development Partners, Telecommunications Education Committee; Keith Fisher; Michelle Lynch; Rhonda Boyer; Shannon and Gary Jones; and Valerie Fisher.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.

OTHERS: Others testifying on the bill say a virtual school holds

exciting possibilities; implementing it in a controlled way through the rule-making process should help satisfy some of the concerns.

Others testifying on the bill were Missouri School Administrators Coalition; and Missouri Distance Learning Initiative.

Becky DeNeve, Senior Legislative Analyst