

HCS HB 1511 -- EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

SPONSOR: Baker, 123 (Lager)

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

This substitute requires the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to develop, by June 30, 2007, standards for early childhood education which will be applicable to public preschool programs that receive federal Title I funds or Missouri preschool project funds. The standards must include, among other items, an assessment of needs; a focus on cognitive, language, physical, and social/emotional development; and highly qualified, properly certified teachers. In developing the standards, the department must involve representatives of many groups, including the business community, existing early childhood programs, school districts, and private and faith-based providers. Districts that offer fee-based programs may continue to offer them, in compliance with federal law.

FISCAL NOTE: No impact on state funds in FY 2007, FY 2008, and FY 2009.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that quality early childhood education helps close the achievement gap, because good foundations are established in those years. Studies show lasting effects.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Lager; Missouri State Teachers Association; Missouri National Education Association; Missouri Federation of Teachers and School-Related Personnel; Citizens for Missouri's Children; and Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

OPPOSERS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.

OTHERS: Others testifying on the bill say there's some concern with ensuring that the bill is not perceived as providing no-fee access to a program that charges fees.

Others testifying on the bill were Missouri Association of School Administrators; and Missouri School Boards' Association.

Becky DeNeve, Senior Legislative Analyst