

HCS HB 1272 -- METROPOLITAN SCHOOL DISTRICT IMPROVEMENT ACT

SPONSOR: Hoskins (El-Amin)

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "do pass" by the Special Committee on Urban Education Reform by a vote of 6 to 0.

This substitute establishes the Metropolitan School District Improvement Act regarding public schools in the City of St. Louis. In its main provisions, the substitute:

- (1) Authorizes a 50% tax credit to fund extended day care for any child from three years of age to kindergarten who qualifies for the reduced school lunch program. Individual donations are limited to \$50,000, and the program has a \$2 million limit;
- (2) Requires the district to begin a program to keep students with the same teacher for three years, commonly known as looping;
- (3) Increases teacher starting salaries and institutes peer performance review;
- (4) Requires the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to determine the top 10% of improved schools and award a one-time bonus to certain school personnel. The schools will also receive \$2,000 for textbooks and other educational materials;
- (5) Requires student assessment every six weeks, with mandatory remedial work if a student is not proficient, and teacher assessment by examination every five years;
- (6) Establishes at least one alternative school; and
- (7) Imposes a dress code requiring students to wear a school uniform.

The provision regarding the tax credit will expire six years from the effective date.

FISCAL NOTE: Estimated Cost on General Revenue Fund of \$27,819,000 to Unknown in FY 2008, FY 2009, and FY 2010. No impact on Other State Funds in FY 2008, FY 2009, and FY 2010.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that a focus on student achievement and teacher quality should help the St. Louis schools improve their academic achievement.

Testifying for the bill was Representative El-Amin.

OPPONENTS: Those who oppose the bill say that some of the provisions contradict the Master Settlement Agreement. Many of the programs are already underway although not in the same form as the bill requires.

Testifying against the bill were St. Louis Public Schools; and Mary Armstrong, St. Louis American Federation of Teachers Local 420.