

SB 135 -- MISSOURI HIGHER EDUCATION LOAN AUTHORITY

SPONSOR: Nodler (Kingery)

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "do pass" by the Committee on Higher Education by a vote of 5 to 2.

Currently, the Missouri Higher Education Loan Authority (MOHELA) is authorized to administer loans for college-level courses, including loans to high school students taking these courses. This bill adds elementary and middle school-level work, including remediation, developmental work, and test preparation to its authority. The bill also removes a provision that restricts loans to parents and guardians of postsecondary students and authorizes MOHELA to create, invest in, contribute to, or acquire financial aid programs or research that improves student access to or completion of higher education.

FISCAL NOTE: No impact on state funds in FY 2008, FY 2009, and FY 2010.

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that since middle school students need to begin preparing for college, extending the authority of MOHELA to administer loans for younger students is a way of providing more access to higher education.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Kingery; Quentin Wilson, Missouri Higher Education Loan Authority; and Thomas Ousley, Infinite Scholars Program.

OPPONENTS: Those who oppose the bill say that the subsection that authorizes MOHELA to invest in research is so broadly written that it could be interpreted as permitting stem cell research.

Testifying against the bill was Missouri Right to Life.

OTHERS: Others testifying on the bill say rules of statutory construction will not support a broad reading of the research-authorization subsection.

Testifying on the bill was David Klarich, Missouri Higher Education Loan Authority.