

## HB 50 -- School Accreditation

Sponsor: Lair

Currently, a two-year period is required between classifying a school district as unaccredited and the lapse of the district's corporate organization. Under this bill, when the State Board of Education within the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education classifies a district as unaccredited, it must review the governance of the district to establish the conditions under which the existing school board will continue to govern or determine the date on which the district will lapse and an alternative governing structure for the district.

The bill changes the timing and purpose of the hearing that the department must conduct to require at least two public hearings regarding the district's accreditation status. The hearings provide an opportunity to convene community resources to support the school district as it attempts to return to accredited status.

When it classifies a district as unaccredited, the state board may allow continued governance by the existing local board under specific terms and conditions or appoint a special administrative board to oversee the district. The special board must consist of at least five members, the majority of whom must be district residents. The board members must reflect the population characteristics of the district and collectively possess strong experience in school governance, management and finance, and leadership. A special administrative board will be responsible for the operation of the district until it is classified as provisionally accredited for at least two successive school years, after which time the state board may provide for a transition back to local governance.

If the state board determines an alternative governing structure, it must provide a rationale for its decision and review and recertify the alternative form of governance every three years. In addition, it must create a public comment method for the residents of the district, establish expectations for academic progress that includes an anticipated time line to reach full accreditation, and provide annual reports to the General Assembly and Governor on the district's progress toward accreditation including a review of the effectiveness of the alternative governance.

A special administrative board will retain the authority granted to a school board under the laws of the state in effect at the time of the district's lapse and may enter into contracts with accredited districts or other education service providers to deliver high quality educational programs. If a student graduates from a school

operated under a contract with an accredited district, the student's diploma will be from the accredited district.

Neither the special administrative board nor its members or employees will be deemed to be the state or a state agency for any purpose. The state, its agencies and employees, will have absolute immunity from liability.

The bill repeals:

(1) A provision that allows the state board to assign the assets and liabilities of a lapsed district to another district upon recommendation of the special administrative board;

(2) The requirement that a provisionally accredited and unaccredited district develop a plan to divide up the district if the district cannot regain accreditation within three years of the loss of accreditation;

(3) The requirement that the SBE must obtain the consent of any district with more than 5,000 students to the attachment of any portion of a lapsed district; and

(4) The authorization for the serving members of a special administrative board to appoint a school superintendent if the state board appoints a successor member to replace the chair of the special administrative board.

The bill contains an emergency clause.