

HCS HB 1247 -- A+ PROGRAM

SPONSOR: Wood

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Committee on Elementary and Secondary Education by a vote of 17 to 0.

This bill changes the laws regarding the A+ Program by:

- (1) Updating references and deleting obsolete provisions;
- (2) Adding a requirement that the Department of Higher Education develop a procedure to reimburse the dual credit course costs incurred during high school by students who qualify for the A+ Program beginning with academic year 2015-16. The reimbursement will be applicable tuition and fees, including book purchase or rental. To qualify, the courses must be provided by a qualified A+ postsecondary institution and accepted for credit at the institution where the student is using the A+ Program. The option applies only to postsecondary students at vocational technical centers and to those pursuing an associate of sciences or applied science degree;
- (3) Providing a priority schedule for fund reimbursement in case sufficient funds are not available for full reimbursement; and
- (4) Revising the current reporting requirement applicable to the Commissioner of Education to include the Commissioner of Higher Education and to specify effectiveness of improving high school outcomes and providing access to and completion of postsecondary programs.

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that a process to recognize and reward those who take dual credit courses would be a great benefit to middle-income families.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Wood; Matt Davis; Missouri School Boards Association; Missouri Association of School Administrators; and Missouri National Education Association.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.

OTHERS: Others testifying on the bill say the idea has merit but needs to be structured so that it does not lower the amount of awards. Community college business offices would like to see the process adjusted somewhat to make it easier to administer. Campuses like the Innovation Campus may benefit from this, although the effects may be hard to gauge.

Testifying on the bill were Leroy Wade, Deputy Commissioner of Higher Education; Missouri Community College Association; and University of Central Missouri.