

HCS HB 1536 -- STUDENT ACCOUNTABILITY

SPONSOR: Spencer

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Committee on Elementary and Secondary Education by a vote of 12 to 5.

This bill repeals the provision that prohibits the establishment of a test as a condition for high school graduation or a state-approved high school diploma, and establishes the Student Accountability Act which, beginning with school year 2017-18, requires that:

(1) A student must score proficient or higher on at least one assessment after eighth grade in each core area of mathematics, communication arts, social sciences, and science in order to receive a high school academic diploma from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, except that the parent or guardian of the student, or the student if he or she is an emancipated minor or no longer a minor, may choose the ACT, COMPASS, ASVAB, or GED instead of the statewide assessments;

(2) A student receiving special education services whose education plan specifies that the student scores at least one standard deviation below average on a generally accepted intelligence test may be awarded a diploma of local achievement; and

(3) A student who does not qualify under either of the above options must not be awarded any high school diploma.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that a high school diploma is no longer a sign that a student is prepared for work or college. Students need to be held accountable for their preparation and not just be passed along to increase the graduation rate.

Testifying for the bill was Representative Spencer.

OPPOSERS: Those who oppose the bill say that while student accountability is a good idea, it would be better to get student buy-in through participation in planning their courses and not through a high-stakes test. There may be unintended consequences, especially for students in special education.

Testifying against the bill were Missouri National Education Association; Diane Golden, Missouri Council of Administrators of Special Education; and Missouri Association of School Administrators.