

HCS HB 1408 -- VIRTUAL EDUCATION

SPONSOR: Spencer

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Standing Committee on Elementary and Secondary Education by a vote of 5 to 4. Vote "Do Pass" by the Rules- Administrative Oversight Committee by a vote of 10 to 2.

This bill changes the Missouri Virtual Instruction Program (MOVIP) to "The Missouri Course Access Program" (MCAP). The bill requires school districts and charter schools to permit any K-12 student to enroll in up to two MCAP courses of his or her choice if the student has attended such district or charter school for at least one semester, the course is unavailable in the school district or charter school or there is a scheduling conflict, and the school counselor has advised the student based on the counselor's assessment of whether enrollment in a particular course is in the student's best interests.

The bill further provides that a school district or charter school may permit a K-12 student to enroll in additional MCAP courses if the student has attended such district or charter school for at least one semester and has received approval from the school counselor or other designated person. School districts and charter schools shall develop an appeal procedure for cases in which the designated person denies permission to enroll in additional MCAP courses.

The school district or charter school shall pay the costs of the courses for the student directly to the provider. Tuition is limited to the market necessary costs, and capped at 14% of the state adequacy target for a year-long course and 7% for a semester-long course.

The bill requires the State Board of Education to provide an easily accessible link for course vendors on the MCAP website, allows anyone to submit courses for approval, and requires vendors to accept monthly payments for students enrolled in their courses under the tuition limits established by the bill.

The bill has an effective date of July 1, 2019.

This bill is similar to HCS HB 138 and SB 238 (2017).

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that the bill gives students the opportunity to take courses that their school does not offer, especially in the case of small schools unable to hire teachers for advanced or specialized subject areas.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Spencer; Missouri NEA; Missouri School Counselor Association; Robert Stokes, Stokes Educational Services; Missouri Education Reform Council; Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry; Excellence In Education In Action; American Federation For Children; Missouri Century Foundation; and Connections Education.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.