

HCS SS SCS SBs 603, 576 & 898 -- VIRTUAL EDUCATION

SPONSOR: Onder

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Standing Committee on Elementary and Secondary Education by a vote of 9 to 3. Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Rules-Administrative Oversight by a vote of 8 to 4.

This bill changes the Missouri Virtual Instruction Program (MOVIP) to "The Missouri Course Access and Virtual School Program."

The bill requires school districts and charter schools to adopt a policy for student enrollment in the Missouri course access and virtual school program that is substantially similar to the student enrollment process for courses offered in the brick-and-mortar school. The school must attribute no less than 95% attendance for any student that is a candidate for A+ tuition and has completed a virtual course.

This bill specifies that each school shall pay the costs of enrollment in virtual courses for full-time students who attended a public school for at least one semester immediately before enrolling in the virtual courses. The school shall advise each student on their enrollment in virtual courses. If a school denies a student enrollment in a virtual course, the student may appeal to the school's governing body and then to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education ("DESE"). The bill requires DESE to establish an authorization process for virtual providers and publish an annual report on the course access and virtual school program. Any course that is approved as of August 28, 2018 to participate in the current Missouri Virtual Instruction Program is automatically approved for the Missouri Course Access and Virtual School Program (Section 161.670 RSMo).

This bill also adds virtual institutions to the Access Missouri Financial Assistance Program so long as they meet several requirements specified in the bill, including an exclusively competency-based education model, 25 full-time Missouri employees, and a physical location or campus within Missouri (Sections 173.1101 and 173.1102).

This bill has a delayed effective date of July 1, 2019.

This bill is similar to HCS HB 1408 (2018).

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that some Missouri schools are unable to provide enough math and science courses, and a good virtual

course access program will ensure all students have the opportunity to take sufficient math and science. Additionally brick-and-mortar coursework is inappropriate for some students, including those with medical hardships, and this bill will provide additional education opportunity and choice for all students.

Testifying for the bill were Senator Onder; Missouri National Education Association; Susan Pendergrass, Show-Me Institute; American Federation for Children and Excellence in Education; Missouri Century Foundation; Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry; School Administrator Coalition; Missouri State Teacher's Association; WGU Missouri; and Americans for Prosperity.

OPPONENTS: Those who oppose the bill say that this bill doesn't go far enough because the school still has the ability to prohibit students from taking virtual courses.

Testifying against the bill were Colleen Cook and Missouri Education Reform Council.

OTHERS: Others testifying on the bill say that they are already using virtual education to enrich programs by providing additional technical education, advanced placement courses, and more.

Testifying on the bill was Mike Brown.