

HCS HB 1540 -- RECORDING SCHOOL DISTRICT MEETINGS

SPONSOR: Basye

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Standing Committee on Elementary and Secondary Education by a vote of 10 to 0. Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Rules Administrative Oversight by a vote of 7 to 0.

The following is a summary of the House Committee Substitute for HB 1540.

This bill prevents any public school districts and charter schools from prohibiting a parent or guardian from audio recording any meeting held under the Federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) or a Section 504 plan meeting (Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973).

Districts or charter schools may not require parents to provide more than 24 hours notice in order to record said meeting, and no school district employee who reports a violation under this section shall be subject to discharge, retaliation, or any other adverse employment action for reporting.

The following is a summary of the public testimony from the committee hearing. The testimony was based on the introduced version of the bill.

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that often meetings will last a long time and contain language that is complex and confusing. Allowing for recordings will enable parents to process the meeting and give them an opportunity to understand all aspects of what the district is trying to convey. Supporters stressed that over 80% of the country allows recordings and that this gives students a better opportunity to an equitable education. Supporters stated that recorded meetings would run smoother, with more professionalism.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Basye; Sherlin Romph; Shawan Daniels; Rebecca Uccello; Laquesha Jackson; Lydia Olmstead; James C McLaurin; Amy Salladay; Missouri Disability Empowerment; Michelle Ribaud; Victoria Rollin Ballew; Sara Rivera.

OPPONENTS: Those who oppose the bill say that this should not be legislated as it is a local district policy concern. There are legal ramifications that might not have been considered including issues of data storage concerns and expenses associated with the authentication of recordings. Opponents also stressed that teachers might feel stifled if they know they are being recorded.

Testifying against the bill was Phyllis Wolfram , Missouri Council of Administrators of Special Education.

OTHERS: Others testifying on the bill say that there should be recordings of disciplinary meetings as well, and that the school districts must balance interests of privacy for all students. Districts have an obligation to make sure that a parent does not leave the meeting without a clear understanding, so the purpose of recording for accuracy or clarity would run counter to that obligation.

Testifying on the bill were Susan Goldhammer, Missouri School Boards Association; Special School District of St. Louis; and Dr. Lara Wakefield.