

HCS HBs 616 & 90 -- CONFER DEGREES AT PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

SPONSOR: Stinnett

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Standing Committee on Higher Education and Workforce Development by a vote of 11 to 3.

The following is a summary of the House Committee Substitute for HBs 616 & 90.

This bill relates to the authority to confer degrees at public institutions of higher education.

The bill repeals the following provisions:

(1) The University of Missouri is the State's only public research university and the exclusive grantor of research doctorates and first-professional degrees, including dentistry, law, medicine, optometry, pharmacy, and veterinary medicine (Section 172.280, RSMo);

(2) Degrees in podiatry and chiropractic and osteopathic medicine may be conferred only by the University of Missouri or by a public institution of higher education in collaboration with the University of Missouri, with the University of Missouri being the degree-granting institution, unless the University of Missouri declines to collaborate with the institution (Section 173.005); and

(3) Degrees in engineering may be conferred only by the University of Missouri or by a public institution of higher education in collaboration with the University of Missouri, with the University of Missouri being the degree-granting institution, unless the University of Missouri declines to collaborate with the institution (Section 174.160).

This bill is the same as HB 1497 (2024).

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 this is a much needed change to the current system that allows one university in the State to be restrictive and monopolize the degrees and programs. Missouri is one of the most restrictive when it comes to PhD programs and the only state that limits engineering degree programs. The cost of creating a new program would be up to the universities and only

expansion that made sense would be undergone. This is about power and control from a small group and expanding options for Missourians is in the best interest of the state.

Testifying in person for the bill were Representative Stinnett; Arnie Dienoff; Tom Strong; John M. Hutchinson; Dr. Richard Williams, Missouri State University; and Peter Herschend.

OPPONENTS: Those who oppose the bill say that this would dilute already stretched resources of the State to expand programs that are already an option. Currently, universities can partner with the University of Missouri to provide over 10 doctoral degrees and there have been over 200 programs presented to the board with only three denied since 2017. This bill is a duplication of resources and would lower the quality of degrees.

Testifying in person against the bill were University of Missouri; and Charles (Chuck) Brazeale.

Written testimony has been submitted for this bill. The full written testimony and witnesses testifying online can be found under Testimony on the bill page on the House website.