

HCS SS SB 38 -- EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

SPONSOR: Washington

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Standing Committee on Emerging Issues by a vote of 11 to 3. Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Rules-Legislative by a vote of 5 to 0, with 3 voting present.

The following is a summary of the House Committee Substitute for SB 38.

This bill defines "antisemitism" or "antisemitic" and requires that public schools, school districts, and public institutions of higher education integrate the definition of antisemitism into codes of conduct and prohibit antisemitic conduct.

Public schools, school districts, and public institutions of higher education are encouraged to integrate a Jewish American heritage curriculum for students. (Section 160.014 and 173.001)

The bill prohibits discrimination by public schools, school districts, and public institutions of higher education on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, sex, disability, religion, or marital status against students or employees. The bill provides that classes, guidance services, counseling services, and financial assistance services be available equally.

The bill requires the State Board of Education and the Coordinating Board for Higher Education to establish Title VI coordinators to monitor antisemitic discrimination and harassment at public schools and education institutions. The coordinators will investigate complaints and determine if an education institution has engaged in, allowed, or failed to prohibit the discrimination and harassment and compile annual reports to be submitted to the General Assembly by July 1st of each year. (Section 160.015 and 173.001)

This bill creates the "Missouri Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair (Missouri CROWN) Act", which governs discriminatory practices in elementary and secondary educational institutions as they relate to protective hairstyles. The bill defines an "educational institution" as including any public or private prekindergarten program, public or private elementary or secondary school, charter school, or public or private school board, charter school governing board, or other school administrative body.

Under the bill, educational institutions that receive state financial assistance or enroll students who receive state financial aid will not discriminate based on a person's hair texture or protective hairstyle if it is commonly associated with a particular race or origin. However, educational institutions can require hair nets, coverings, or secured hair for safety reasons in career and technical training courses, as needed to meet safety regulations.

These provisions will not apply to an educational institution that is controlled by a religious organization if the application of such provision would not be consistent with the religious tenets of that organization. (Section 160.082 and Section 160.083)

This bill defines "multiple-occupancy restroom or changing area", and limits civil liability for private schools that establish such restrooms and changing areas for the exclusive use of males or females. The bill prohibits political subdivisions from adopting any ordinance, rule, or regulation prohibiting private schools from establishing multiple-occupancy restrooms and requires such entities to pay for attorney fees and costs incurred by a private school for a valid defense. This section is subject to an emergency clause. (Section 160.231)

These provisions will not apply to an educational institution that is controlled by a religious organization if the application of such provision would not be consistent with the religious tenets of that organization. (Sections 173.001 and 173.002)

This bill states that the University of Missouri must be the only state college or university to offer research doctorates, and that the Board of Governors of Missouri State University will have the power and authority to grant doctor of philosophy degrees in disciplines other than engineering and to grant bachelors of science degrees in veterinary technology. (Sections 172.280 and 174.160)

This bill specifies that, prior to June 30, 2027, the coordinating board, with the assistance of an advisory committee, must approve a 60 credit hour transferable lower-division courses and common course numbering equivalency matrix for the five applicable degree programs outlined in the bill beginning in the 2027-28 academic year. Each public institution of higher education, offering the approved degree programs, must include in its programs of study an approved 60 hour program equivalency matrix. (Section 178.786)

If a student successfully completes the 60-credit-hour, transferable, lower-division courses at a public institution of higher education, such courses can be transferred and will be substituted for core curriculum courses in the same degree program

at a receiving institution. The transferring student receives credit toward the student's degree and is not required to take additional core classes for the same degree program at the receiving institution. Transferring students who have not fully completed the transferable coursework curriculum can be required to satisfy further course requirements at the receiving institution. The coordinating board must report to the House Higher Education Committee and the Senate Education Committee on progress related to the requirements of the bill. (Section 178.787)

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

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that a person's hair can represent bold statements of them as a person, since it is a literal outgrowth of their inner self sprouting outward. Having a specific hairstyle can sometimes lead to different treatment from others, and supporters say that this bill celebrates the inclusivity and diversity of the multitude of hairstyles that people wear.

Testifying in person for the bill were Senator Washington; Maggie Wigger; National Association of Social Workers - MO; Abortion Action Missouri; American Civil Liberties Union of Missouri; Arnie Dienoff; Dava-Leigh Brush, Missouri Equity Education Partnership; Missouri NAACP.

OPPONENTS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.

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.