

HCS HB 2722 -- SUCCESS FOR HOMELESS AND FOSTER YOUTH IN HIGHER EDUCATION ACT

SPONSOR: Douglas

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Standing Committee on Elementary and Secondary Education by a vote of 13 to 2.

The following is a summary of the House Committee Substitute for HB 2722.

This bill creates the "Success for Homeless and Foster Youth in Higher Education Act" and requires that each public institution of higher education establish a liaison position for homeless and foster pupils. Criteria for the liaison qualifications include knowledge of homeless pupil issues and laws. Private institutions of higher education may also establish a liaison.

The bill outlines the duties of the liaison and allows institutions to grant resident status to a student that is homeless and under 20 years old as long as such student is eligible for a postsecondary education public benefit under Section 173.1110, RSMo. Institutions may also develop a plan to ensure stable housing and financial aid packages to ensure access to housing resources that are open for most of the year.

The bill also requires the Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development to create a searchable directory of homeless and foster student liaisons that have been designated by each institution and to update the directory annually.

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

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that this bill addresses a true need in Missouri by providing a link for homeless students in the K-12 schools and the institutions of higher education. Currently, there are staff members at colleges that interact with homeless students because that information is provided on the FAFSA and in the financial aid office. The concept of this bill is to provide a resource at the Department that would help coordinate who those staff members are at each institution. There are similar bills in other states and this bill goes on to help coordinate resources such as housing and address food insecurities. Having a K-12 and higher education collaboration is important and this

would also help foster students that age out of the foster system often before they are secure at a college.

Testifying in person for the bill were Representative Douglas; and Missouri NEA.

OPPONENTS: Those who oppose the bill say that this is not the role of state government and that with a deficit in funding for education already this is a duplication of current services offered by the Department of Social Services. Colleges that want to do this can already do something for homeless students. Churches and non-profits should and can provide resources for the homeless.

Testifying in person against the bill was Arnie C. Dienoff.

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.