

---

## DIGEST

The digest printed below was prepared by House Legislative Services. It constitutes no part of the legislative instrument. The keyword, one-liner, abstract, and digest do not constitute part of the law or proof or indicia of legislative intent. [R.S. 1:13(B) and 24:177(E)]

---

Seabaugh

HB No. 597

**Abstract:** Provides for the Student Scholarships for Educational Excellence (vouchers) Program.

Present law provides for the Student Scholarships for Educational Excellence Program. Provides that eligible students are those residing in La. from families with a total income not exceeding 250% of the current federal poverty guidelines and who are entering kindergarten, were enrolled in a La. public school that had a letter grade of C, D, or F, or received a scholarship the previous school year. Provides that eligible participating schools are public and nonpublic schools throughout La. that meet program requirements.

Provides that the state Dept. of Education will conduct the random selection process and authorizes enrollment preferences to students enrolled in the Nonpublic School Early Childhood Development Program at the participating school, students transferring from an ineligible school, and students residing in parishes as may be specified by eligible participating schools. Provides that after students from "D" and "F" public schools are placed in participating schools, students from "C" schools shall be entered into the random selection process. Requires parents to indicate their choices of participating schools and requires that scholarship recipients be placed according to the indicated preferences. Provides that a participating nonpublic school has to have been approved for more than two years in order to admit scholarship recipients as more than 20% of total enrollment.

Requires minimum foundation program (MFP) funds be allocated to each participating school in an amount equal to the per-pupil amount allocated to the local school system where the participating student resides. Provides that the amount be counted toward the equitable allocation of funds appropriated to local school systems as provided in present constitution (Art. 8, §13). For participating schools that charge tuition, requires that under certain circumstances, any remaining funds be returned to the state or to the local public school system according to the pro rata share for the annual per-pupil amount as determined by the MFP. Provides that scholarship recipients be considered public school students for MFP funding purposes.

Permits parents of special education students receiving scholarships to make a parental placement to receive special education services from a nonpublic school that has demonstrated capacity to offer the services. Allows participating nonpublic schools to charge higher tuition for special education students. Requires MFP funds be allocated to each participating school in a per-pupil amount equal to a special education tuition amount which is in addition to the nonpublic school's maximum scholarship payment. Prohibits the total of the payment and the

special education tuition from exceeding the amount allocated for that student to the local school system.

Requires the department to develop an accountability system for participating students at participating schools and prohibits any change to such system except by an Act of the legislature. Further requires the department to annually publish certain student test result data, a list of public schools with certain letter grades, cohort graduation rates, retention rates, and parental satisfaction rates for participating schools as applicable. Provides that local school boards shall delegate authority to participate in the program to the local superintendent. Requires participating nonpublic schools to provide parents with the results of the state examinations required to be administered to scholarship recipients. Exempts scholarship recipients attending participating nonpublic schools from present law that requires local school boards to provide free transportation to students who reside more than one mile from school.

Permits scholarship recipients to remain eligible to receive scholarships in each succeeding year that they remain enrolled in a participating school through grade 12. Allows for enrollment preferences to siblings of scholarship recipients. Requires participating nonpublic schools to ensure that scholarship recipients are administered all examinations required pursuant to the state's school and district accountability program. Provides for administration of the program by the state Dept. of Education in accordance with rules and regulations adopted by the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE). Requires the department annually to report to the House and Senate education committees and the Joint Legislative Committee on the Budget on the implementation of the program including specified information.

Proposed law retains present law.

(Amends R.S. 17:158(A)(1) and 4011 - 4025)