

Regular Session, 2014

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 140

BY REPRESENTATIVE REYNOLDS

SCHOOLS/CHOICE: Requests that the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education study the feasibility of developing an accountability system for nonpublic schools participating in the voucher program comparable to the accountability system for public schools

1 A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

2 To urge and request the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to study the
3 feasibility of developing and implementing an accountability system for nonpublic
4 schools participating in the Student Scholarships for Educational Excellence
5 Program that is comparable to and contains the same components, requirements, and
6 criteria as the accountability system for public schools and to submit a written report
7 of findings and recommendations to the House Committee on Education and the
8 Senate Committee on Education not later than December 1, 2014.

9 WHEREAS, current law establishes a voucher program known as the Student
10 Scholarships for Educational Excellence Program and provides for the legislature's findings
11 and declarations relative to the program, including that it is in the public interest that all
12 Louisiana schoolchildren receive the best education that its citizens can provide and that the
13 state has the right, responsibility, duty, and obligation to accomplish the objective of quality
14 education for all Louisiana children; and

15 WHEREAS, the legislature also finds and declares in current law, relative to the
16 participation of nonpublic schools in this program, that nonpublic schools can offer a quality
17 education to students and that it is in the public interest to offer students the means of
18 accessing the educational opportunities offered by nonpublic schools by providing them with
19 scholarships to attend such schools; and

1 WHEREAS, both public and nonpublic schools must meet specific eligibility criteria
2 to participate in this program; and

3 WHEREAS, a public school must have received a letter grade of "A" or "B", or any
4 variation thereof, for the most recent school year pursuant to the school and district
5 accountability system; and

6 WHEREAS, school letter grades are designed to be reflective of school performance;
7 thus, parents who choose to send their children to a public school participating in the
8 program are able to make an informed choice based on the knowledge that it has been
9 determined through the accountability system to be a high-performing school; and

10 WHEREAS, meanwhile, a nonpublic school must meet these criteria in order to
11 participate in the program: be approved, provisionally approved, or probationally approved
12 by the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education and comply with the criteria set
13 forth in *Brumfield, et al. v. Dodd, et al.* 425 F. Supp. 528.; current law also stipulates that
14 in a nonpublic school that has been so approved for less than two years, enrollment of
15 scholarship recipients shall not exceed twenty percent of its total student enrollment; and

16 WHEREAS, thus, while there are some standards and safeguards in place relative to
17 the eligibility of nonpublic schools, and while current law does require the state Department
18 of Education to develop criteria for participation that include an accountability system for
19 participating students at participating schools, there is some concern among parents and the
20 general public relative to a general lack of knowledge as to the quality of some of the
21 participating nonpublic schools; and

22 WHEREAS, because parents need and deserve assurance that the quality of
23 education in each participating nonpublic school is monitored and maintained, nonpublic
24 schools participating in the program should be evaluated according to comparable criteria
25 and with the same level of rigor that the accountability system applies to public schools; and

26 WHEREAS, parental choice educational programs are best implemented when
27 parents are empowered to access information through which they can evaluate the
28 effectiveness of the school where they choose to send their children, and in the case of a
29 nonpublic school, this should include information demonstrating how such a school
30 compares to a parent's public school options; and

1 WHEREAS, in order to ensure the state's fulfillment of what the legislature declares
2 to be the state's right, responsibility, duty, and obligation to accomplish the objective of
3 quality education for all Louisiana children, it is appropriate that the State Board of
4 Elementary and Secondary Education evaluate the feasibility of developing and
5 implementing an accountability system for nonpublic schools participating in the Student
6 Scholarships for Educational Excellence Program that is comparable to such system for
7 public schools.

8 THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby
9 urge and request the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to study the
10 feasibility of developing and implementing an accountability system for nonpublic schools
11 participating in the Student Scholarships for Educational Excellence Program that is
12 comparable to and contains the same components, requirements, and criteria as the
13 accountability system for public schools, including but not limited to requirements for high
14 stakes testing, assignment of letter grades to schools, and publishing and reporting of
15 accountability results, and to submit a written report of findings and recommendations to the
16 House Committee on Education and the Senate Committee on Education not later
17 December 1, 2014.

18 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this Resolution be transmitted to the
19 president of the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education and to the state
20 superintendent of education.

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)]

Reynolds

HCR No. 140

Requests that the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education study the feasibility of developing and implementing an accountability system for nonpublic schools participating in the Student Scholarships for Educational Excellence (voucher) Program that is comparable to and contains the same components, requirements, and criteria as such system for public schools, including but not limited to requirements for high stakes testing, assignment of school letter grades, and publishing and reporting of accountability results, and submit a report of findings and recommendations to the House and Senate education committees by Dec. 1, 2014.