

REVENUE: No revenue impact

FISCAL: Fiscal statement issued

Action: Do Pass as Amended and Be Printed Engrossed and Be Referred to the Committee on Rules

Vote: 3 - 2 - 0

Yeas: Bonamici, Metsger, Hass

Nays: Kruse, Morse

Exc.: 0

Prepared By: Dana Richardson, Administrator

Meeting Dates: 4/1, 4/10, 4/22, 4/27

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES: Defines virtual public charter school (virtual school) as one that provides online courses. Specifies that definition does not include a public charter school that primarily serves students at a physical location. Specifies requirements for virtual schools. Requires charter school applicants to provide description of and plan for having financial management systems in place. Permits failure to maintain sound financial management systems for two consecutive years to be used as grounds to terminate a charter. Requires virtual school to have on file itemized budget including annual operating expenses and profit margin for any third-party entity contracted with to provide educational services. Requires Senate President and Speaker of the House to convene work group to ensure appropriate access to online learning through charter schools. Specifies work group membership including parents of students enrolled in virtual school. Specifies items to be considered by work group and requires report that may include recommendations for legislation to the next session of the Seventy-fifth Legislative Assembly that convenes in 2010. Sunsets work group upon convening of next regular legislative session. Imposes a moratorium on: 1) approval of charter that would become a sponsor for a virtual school, 2) as of May 1, 2009, the number of students in a virtual school under certain circumstances, and 3) waivers of any provision of public charter school statute for virtual schools. Applies moratorium in parts 1 and 3 to requests or waivers that are pending upon effective date of the Act. Revokes waivers granted on or after April 27, 2009. Repeals moratorium as of July 1, 2011. Declares emergency; effective upon passage.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Appropriate age to begin online education
- Asynchronous learning
- Comparisons of student learning in virtual versus brick and mortar schools
- Impact of 50 percent rule on rural students
- Parent engagement at virtual schools
- Transparency and accountability requirements
- Membership of interim work group
- Cost of providing education at a virtual school
- Meaning of bi-weekly

EFFECT OF COMMITTEE AMENDMENT: Replaces the measure.

BACKGROUND: Current statute establishes requirements for enrollment of students in public charter schools. Public charter schools that offer any online courses are required to have at least 50 percent of their students reside in the district in which the school is located. The State Board of Education has considered waivers to this requirement, but has not standardized guidelines for determining when to grant a waiver.

Requirements of virtual schools under Senate Bill 767A include: a plan to address improving student learning and meeting academic content standards; performance criteria to measure progress in meeting academic performance goals; a plan to directly and significantly involve parents and guardians of students; a budget, business plan and governance plan; an agreement that the school will use an interactive Internet-based technology platform that monitors and tracks student progress and attendance; an agreement to employ only licensed teachers who are highly qualified under federal law; a plan for maintaining student and school records at a designated central office; a plan to provide equitable access

that ensures each student has computer and printer equipment and is offered an Internet service cost reimbursement arrangement; a plan to provide students' lesson materials in English or the native language of the student under certain circumstances; a plan to conduct educational events at least six times each year; a plan to conduct biweekly meetings between teachers and students either in person or through other means; and a plan to provide face-to-face meetings between teachers and students at least six times a year.