

Regular Session, 2013

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 69

BY REPRESENTATIVE NORTON

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To urge and request the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to reconsider the motion the board adopted that authorizes school systems to request exceptions to requirements in board policy relative to school libraries.

WHEREAS, as stated in the Constitution of Louisiana, the goal of the public educational system is to provide learning environments and experiences, at all stages of human development, that are humane, just, and designed to promote excellence in order that every individual may be afforded an equal opportunity to develop to his full potential; and

WHEREAS, the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) proposed revisions to Section 1705 of Bulletin 741, The Louisiana Handbook for School Administrators, that, if implemented, would have eliminated crucial requirements pertaining to the purpose, philosophy, and staffing of school libraries; and

WHEREAS, following widespread public concern about the detrimental effect that these proposed revisions would have had on schools and students, BESE ultimately opted not to revise the policy; however, BESE did adopt a motion providing that school systems that need exceptions to the policy may make requests to the state superintendent of education for his consideration; and

WHEREAS, granting school systems the authority to request waivers relative to BESE policy requirements pertaining to school libraries and librarians is troubling to some, because without these requirements in place, schools could face the possibility of losing library staff, materials, facilities, and funding, which would be devastating to the students and schools of the state; and

WHEREAS, if such waivers are granted, a school system could be exempt from policies that require that each school have library or media services appropriate to the instructional levels and exceptionalities of its students and that the use of funds for library

services for exceptional students be at least proportionate to that expended for regular students; and

WHEREAS, additionally, while the policy as retained requires that each secondary school have a library and a certain number of librarians based on the size of the student population, some may interpret permitting school systems to request exceptions to these requirements as a loophole that allows secondary schools the option of not having a library or any librarians at all; and

WHEREAS, furthermore, some have voiced concern relative to the lack of oversight and transparency that may result from the fact that a school system's authority to request exceptions to the requirements of BESE policy relative to school libraries and librarians was granted through the adoption of a board motion and not in any written rule or policy; and

WHEREAS, school librarians play an indispensable role in schools throughout the state by providing vital educational services to students at every grade level that equip them to succeed in the twenty-first century learning environment; and

WHEREAS, school librarians design and carefully curate well-rounded collections of print and nonprint materials that are tailored specifically to support each school's curriculum, and they provide expert instruction to students on effectively accessing, evaluating, and utilizing information technologies for educational purposes; and

WHEREAS, school librarians cultivate learning opportunities that enable students to become proficient in their pursuit of information and educate students in terms of developing critical-thinking and problem-solving skills that are essential for college and career readiness and for citizenship and life; and

WHEREAS, beyond their key curricular role, school libraries give each member of a school's learning community a venue for fostering lifelong learning and literacy; and

WHEREAS, ultimately, it is in a library, more so than in a classroom, where a child learns to seek an answer to his or her own question—a skill that transcends the formal education environment and serves the individual throughout his or her life, and an education that does not nurture this skill is not a complete education; and

WHEREAS, all students need and deserve quality school libraries run by qualified school librarians, and students who have access to school libraries that are well staffed and well stocked are more likely to succeed in school and in life; and

WHEREAS, it is critical that the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education reconsider the motion the board adopted that authorizes school systems to request exceptions to requirements in board policy pertaining to school libraries lest it should fail to fulfill the state's constitutional duty of affording every student an equal opportunity to develop to his full potential.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to reconsider the motion the board adopted that authorizes school systems to request exceptions to requirements in The Louisiana Handbook for School Administrators relative to school libraries.

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

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE