

2017 Regular Session

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 183

BY REPRESENTATIVE SMITH

A RESOLUTION

To urge and request the governing authority of each public school and of each nonpublic school that participates in the Student Scholarships for Educational Excellence Program to adopt a policy on the assessment, collection, and use of student fees.

WHEREAS, House Concurrent Resolution No. 137 of the 2016 Regular Session of the Legislature requested the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to conduct a study on the prevalence and use of student fees in Louisiana public elementary and secondary schools and to submit a written report of its findings to the House Committee on Education and Senate Committee on Education; and

WHEREAS, in response to the resolution, the state Department of Education surveyed public school governing authorities throughout the state about student fees and received responses from close to one hundred percent of such governing authorities; and

WHEREAS, fifty-six percent of the public school governing authorities responding reported they have a formal policy on student fees and eighty-nine percent reported that they do not publish a listing of student fees on their websites; and

WHEREAS, fees collected by public school governing authorities include fees assessed to all students enrolled, fees assessed for specific course participation, and fees assessed for participation in various student activities, and such fees range from ten dollars per student to up to three hundred dollars per course enrolled; and

WHEREAS, public school governing authorities do not have a consistent policy for addressing economic hardships when students are unable to pay fees; and

WHEREAS, the study did not address the use of student fees for students attending nonpublic schools that participate in the Student Scholarships for Educational Excellence Program; and

WHEREAS, public funds are used to educate students who receive vouchers to attend these nonpublic schools; and

WHEREAS, all students should have equal access to a quality education; and

WHEREAS, the inability to pay fees should not prevent economically disadvantaged students from having access to a quality education whether through a traditional public school, a charter school, or a nonpublic school participating in the voucher program and these students should be given the same opportunities as other students; and

WHEREAS, parents of school children should be provided with clear information regarding fees charged to students, including the use of such fees and the process by which they may request a waiver based on economic hardship; and

WHEREAS, school governing authorities should engage in an open and transparent process when assessing student fees and adopting policies relative to student fees and should meaningfully consult with parents.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the House of Representatives of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request the governing authority of each public school and of each nonpublic school that participates in the Student Scholarships for Educational Excellence Program to adopt a policy on the assessment, collection, and use of student fees.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the policy shall include but not be limited to the following:

(1) A list of all fees, their purpose and use, and the exact dollar amount or authorized range for each.

(2) A description of how authorized fees are to be collected and spent.

(3) A description of how students or their parents may request a waiver of payment of such fees due to economic hardship.

(4) The process for and frequency of the approval of such waivers.

(5) A prohibition against assessing any fees not authorized by the governing authority's policy.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the policy shall be posted to the website of the school governing authority and each school, along with a complete list of authorized fees and a description of the process by which students or their parents may request a waiver due to economic hardship.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the House of Representatives of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request the state Department of Education, the Louisiana School Boards Association, and the Louisiana Association of Public Charter Schools to assist the school governing authorities in developing such policies.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the state Department of Education shall submit a report to the House Committee on Education and the Senate Committee on Education no later than January 1, 2018, identifying the policies that have been adopted by the school governing authorities as provided in this Resolution.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the state superintendent of education, the executive director of the Louisiana School Boards Association, and the executive director of the Louisiana Association of Public Charter Schools.

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES