

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 196

BY SENATOR HENRY

A RESOLUTION

To urge and request the Board of Regents and the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to study collaboratively the feasibility and advisability of allowing computer coding and American Sign Language to substitute for Foreign Language for purposes of satisfying requirements relative to qualification for Taylor Opportunity Program for Students awards and high school graduation and submit jointly a written report of findings and conclusions, including any recommendations for related legislation, to the Senate Committee on Education and the House Committee on Education by March 10, 2023.

WHEREAS, the Constitution of Louisiana provides that it is the goal of the state's public educational system to afford every individual an equal opportunity to develop to his full potential; and

WHEREAS, computer coding is a dynamic and challenging high school course that provides an excellent foundation for students interested in pursuing further studies and high-demand, high-wage careers in technology-related fields; and

WHEREAS, just as many world languages exist, there is an extensive number of computer coding languages that a programmer may use to communicate with a computer, and these skills are increasingly important in a technologically advanced world economy; and

WHEREAS, American Sign Language is equally as important as traditional Foreign Language in that it teaches students the skills to communicate with people in different ways and gives students an advantage in the workforce; and

WHEREAS, American Sign Language is already considered a foreign language for receiving the State Seal of Biliteracy as provided in R.S. 17:273.4; and

WHEREAS, some students who are particularly interested in learning the skills offered in computer coding courses or American Sign Language courses would like the option of taking these courses instead of a traditional Foreign Language to count for credit toward satisfying requirements for high school graduation and Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS) award qualification, but that is not currently an option; and

WHEREAS, computer coding and American Sign Language are not listed as courses that a student can take to fulfill requirements for high school graduation; and

WHEREAS, in 2019, at least fourteen states allowed students to receive Foreign Language credits for courses other than foreign language, including courses in computer coding; and

WHEREAS, graduation requirements are set in the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education policy, except for graduation requirements for a career diploma, which are set in state law; TOPS core curricula requirements are also provided in state law, thus, amendments of such laws should be considered; and

WHEREAS, there has been a move in recent years to align high school graduation requirements with TOPS core curricula requirements, thus, any revisions of these requirements should be made in concert; and

WHEREAS, in order to fulfill the state's constitutional duty of affording every student an equal opportunity to develop to his full potential, it is appropriate that the feasibility and advisability of allowing computer coding and American Sign Language to substitute for Foreign Language for purposes of satisfying requirements relative to qualification for TOPS awards and high school graduation receive a thorough evaluation.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request the Board of Regents and the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to study collaboratively the feasibility and advisability of allowing computer coding and American Sign Language to substitute for Foreign Language for purposes of satisfying requirements relative to qualification for Taylor Opportunity Program for Students awards and high school graduation and submit jointly a written report of findings and conclusions, including any recommendations for related legislation, to the Senate Committee on Education and the House Committee on Education by March 10, 2023.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the chairman of the Board of Regents and the president of the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE