

2018 Second Extraordinary Session

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 12

BY REPRESENTATIVE SMITH

A RESOLUTION

To create the Task Force on Student Fees to study and make recommendations relative to the assessment of fees to students attending public schools and students attending nonpublic schools as part of the Student Scholarships for Educational Excellence Program and to submit a written report of findings and recommendations to the House Committee on Education not later than January 31, 2019.

WHEREAS, House Concurrent Resolution No. 137 of the 2016 Regular Session requested the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to study the prevalence and use of student fees in public elementary and secondary schools; and

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

WHEREAS, the report disclosed the assessment of several types of fees to students, including fees charged to all students enrolled at a school, fees assessed for participation in specific courses, and fees assessed for participation in extracurricular student activities; fees ranged from ten dollars per student to three hundred dollars per course, with students sometimes charged several fees each school year; and

WHEREAS, fifty-six percent of respondents reported having a formal policy in place regarding student fees, while eighty-nine percent reported that they did not publish on their websites, for parental review, a listing of specific fees assessed; and

WHEREAS, few respondents were able to identify a formal policy or information on their websites regarding economic hardship waivers for students unable to pay fees; and

WHEREAS, without consideration of family economic hardships, economically disadvantaged students could experience limited access to rigorous courses, experiences, and services that comprise a quality education; and

WHEREAS, based on the findings of the report, the legislature passed House Resolution No. 183 of the 2017 Regular Session, which requested the governing authority of each public school and 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; and

WHEREAS, in response to the resolution, the state Department of Education notified all such governing authorities of the legislature's request and administered a survey to determine which governing authorities had taken actions to adopt the policies requested; and

WHEREAS, the department received responses from sixty-three percent of such governing authorities; sixty-one percent of respondents reported already having or having recently adopted a formal, written policy, and thirty-nine percent reported that they did not have such a policy; and

WHEREAS, an overwhelming majority of governing authorities were unable to identify clear language within their policies for addressing economic hardships when students are unable to pay fees; and

WHEREAS, the practice of not addressing economic hardships in a clear and consistent manner risks the creation of barriers to equity and opportunity; and

WHEREAS, the Constitution of Louisiana provides that 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, all students, regardless of their socioeconomic status, must have equal access to a quality education in order to develop to their full potential.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the House of Representatives of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby establish the Task Force on Student Fees to study and make recommendations relative to the assessment of fees to students attending public schools and students attending nonpublic schools through the Student Scholarships for

Educational Excellence Program and to submit a written report of findings and recommendations to the House Committee on Education not later than January 31, 2019.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the membership of the task force shall be as follows:

(1) One local superintendent appointed by the Louisiana Association of School Superintendents.

(2) One member or staff representative of the Louisiana School Boards Association appointed by the executive director.

(3) One charter school leader appointed by the Louisiana Association for Public Charter Schools.

(4) One member or staff representative of the Louisiana Association of Public Charter Schools appointed by the executive director.

(5) Two principals appointed by the Louisiana Association of Principals.

(6) One leader of a nonpublic school that participates in the Student Scholarships for Educational Excellence Program appointed by the chair of the Nonpublic School Advisory Council established by the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.

(7) Three parents of children attending a traditional public school, a charter school, and a nonpublic school participating in the Student Scholarships for Educational Excellence Program, respectively, selected by the Louisiana Parent Teacher Association.

(8) A representative of the Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services who works with family economic assistance programs appointed by the secretary of the department.

(9) One member of the House Committee on Education appointed by the chairman.

(10) One representative of the state Department of Education who participated in the studies conducted in response to House Concurrent Resolution No. 137 of the 2016 Regular Session and House Resolution No. 183 of the 2017 Regular Session appointed by the state superintendent of education.

(11) One representative of Urban League of Louisiana appointed by the president.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force shall study and make recommendations relative to matters that include but need not be limited to the following:

(1) The establishment of clear, transparent, and consistent processes by which fees and economic hardship considerations are clearly communicated to parents and the public.

(2) The needs of economically disadvantaged students in order to provide for equal access to schools, rigorous courses, and enriching experiences.

(3) Related policies and processes of other states that may serve as best practices.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the representative from the state Department of Education shall convene the first meeting not later than September 1, 2018, and that department staff shall provide administrative support to the task force.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the House of Representatives of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request the governing authorities of all public elementary and secondary schools and nonpublic schools participating in the Student Scholarships for Educational Excellence Program to fully cooperate with the task force and provide any requested information that may be needed to complete its work.

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES