

2019 Regular Session

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 228

BY REPRESENTATIVE MCFARLAND

A RESOLUTION

To urge and request the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to study challenges faced by rural school systems impacted by economic downturn resulting in decreased revenues and declining student populations and to submit a written report of its findings and recommendations to the House Committee on Education no later than January 31, 2020.

WHEREAS, rural communities across Louisiana experience unique challenges, including lack of a strong economic base to support sufficient funding for public education; and

WHEREAS, school systems in rural communities with low property values and little industry struggle due to this insufficient funding for public education; and

WHEREAS, the loss of even one large employer within a rural community has a dramatic negative effect on the financial viability of the local school system resulting in decreased revenues and declining student enrollment; and

WHEREAS, as a significant barrier faced by these rural school systems, inadequate funding is further compounded by other challenges such as high-poverty rates, growing populations of English Language Learners, and difficulties in recruiting and retaining qualified teachers; and

WHEREAS, in addition, many rural school systems have to spend a higher share of their budgets on transportation and other non-instructional costs due to their locations and dispersed student populations; and

WHEREAS, measures that can be used by rural school systems to compensate for these challenges include sharing services, resources, and personnel across school systems, school system consolidation, and school closures; and

WHEREAS, although these measures have been successful in some cases, these options may not be available to all rural school systems in the state due to the costs and time required; and

WHEREAS, the minimum foundation program (MFP) was created to ensure that all school systems, regardless of wealth, are able to secure the funds necessary to meet the needs of all students; and

WHEREAS, the MFP is designed by the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education with separate calculations to provide funding for different educational needs and costs; and

WHEREAS, rural school systems have distinctive needs and challenges that require policies and solutions that consider the specific needs of rural students, educators, and communities.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the House of Representatives of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to study challenges faced by rural school systems impacted by economic downturn resulting in decreased revenues and declining student populations and to submit a written report of its findings and recommendations to the House Committee on Education no later than January 31, 2020.

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

(1) A list of Louisiana's rural school systems, a summary of each system's financial status including but not limited to the information specific to each school system as contained in the "Annual Financial and Statistical Report" published by the state Department of Education, and an overview of the financial risks or vulnerabilities that each such system may be experiencing.

(2) Options and recommendations to identify measures to be taken to ensure that rural school systems remain viable and responsive to the needs of their students and families.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the study shall be conducted in collaboration with the Louisiana School Boards Association and the Louisiana Association of School Superintendents.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the president of the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, the state superintendent of education, the president and the executive director of the Louisiana School Boards Association, and the president of the Louisiana Association of School Superintendents.

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES