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DIGEST

SB 234 Reengrossed

2025 Regular Session

Edmonds

Proposed law provides for the establishment and operation of the St. George Community School System and school board in East Baton Rouge Parish (EBR).

Proposed law will become effective and take effect if the legislature passes and the voters approve an amendment to the La. Constitution that authorizes the St. George Community School System. Provides that the geographical boundaries of the St. George Community School System will be the same as the city of St. George. Specifies that the St. George Community School System is to begin the actual operation of providing for the education of students within its jurisdiction on July 1, 2027.

Proposed law provides that, once proposed law is effective, an interim school board for the St. George Community School System is to be formed and all of the following are to apply:

- (1) The interim school board will consist of seven members who are appointed by the governor based upon the recommendation of members of the Senate and the House of Representatives who represent the geographic boundaries of the new school district.
- (2) Requires that an interim school board member must have attained the age of 18 years, have resided in the state for the two years preceding appointment, have been actually domiciled within the geographic boundaries of the school system for at least one year preceding appointment, and the school district at the time of the appointment. Has the ability to read and write, and actually reside within the geographic boundaries of the school system. Specifies that membership on the interim school board will not disqualify an otherwise eligible person from qualifying as a candidate for election as a member of the St. George Community School Board.
- (3) Provides that a vacancy on the interim school board will be filled in the same manner as the original appointment.
- (4) Provides that the interim school board constitutes a body corporate in law, and states that the organization of the interim school board as well as the board's powers, duties, functions, and responsibilities are to be as provided by law generally for local school boards.
- (5) Requires the interim school board to adopt rules, regulations, and procedures consistent with law to effectuate proposed law and to administer the duties, functions, and responsibilities of the interim board.

- (6) Provides that the interim school board and its members are subject to the state's open meetings and public records laws.
- (7) Specifies that all authority granted to the interim school board by proposed law will expire when the initial elected members of the St. George Community School Board take office. Permits the school board, by formal action, to continue the interim school board as an advisory body on matters previously under the jurisdiction of the interim board.

Proposed law provides that, in the event that the St. George Community School Board begins the actual operation of educating students within its jurisdiction as a separate school system, the EBR Parish School Board is to develop a plan to divide the parish, excluding the area of the St. George Community School System, into single-member districts from each of which one board member is to be elected. With respect to the EBR Parish School Board's proposed redistricting plan, all of the following is to apply:

- (1) The districts in the EBR redistricting plan are to be drawn with as equal population as possible, using population figures from the most recent federal decennial census.
- (2) Specifies that prior to the final adoption of the redistricting plan, the EBR Parish School Board is to order a public hearing on the proposed plan and must publish the time and place of the hearing, a general summary and map of the proposed plan, and the times and places where copies of the proposed plan are available for public inspection in its official journal at least 20 days prior to the date of such hearing.
- (3) Provides that each elected member of the EBR Parish School Board holding office on the date the St. George Community School Board begins the actual operation of educating students within its jurisdiction as a separate school system will serve the remainder of the term of office for which elected. Provides that a vacancy occurring during such term of office will be filled in accordance with law from districts in effect when filled.
- (4) Provides that at the next date on which a regular election for members of the EBR Parish School Board would be held following the date that the St. George Community School Board begins the actual operation of educating students as a separate school system, the members of the EBR Parish School Board are to be elected from single-member districts adopted in accordance with proposed law. Provides that the members so elected and their successors in office will serve four year concurrent terms.

Proposed law provides that any high school student residing within the geographic boundaries of the St. George Community School System or the EBR Parish School System may elect to remain enrolled in the high school he was attending on the effective date of proposed law, until such time as the student graduates from high school. Further provides that such student will be included in the membership count for the school system in which he is enrolled for all purposes, including state funding through the Minimum Foundation Program (MFP) formula.

Proposed law requires the interim school board, within 180 days of appointment, to develop and

adopt an apportionate plan to divide the St. George Community School System into seven single-member districts from each of which one member of the St. George Community School Board is to be elected. Provides that, with respect to the proposed apportionment plan, all the following are to apply:

- (1) Provides that the districts are to be drawn in a manner such that each member of the St. George Community School Board represents roughly the same number of persons, using population figures from the latest federal decennial census, and that the districts are to be effective in time for qualifying for the election established by law generally for school board members.
- (2) Provides that prior to the final adoption of the apportionment plan, the interim school board must order a public hearing on the proposed plan. The interim school board must publish the time and place of the hearing, a general summary and map of the proposed apportionment plan, and the times and places where copies of the proposed plan are available for public inspection in its official journal at least 20 days prior to such hearing.

Proposed law provides that the governor is to appoint an interim school superintendent for the St. George Community School System who shall serve until the members of the school board are elected and the elected board chooses a superintendent as provided by present law.

Proposed law establishes that the interim school board is to be dissolved by the election of members of the St. George Community School Board and all of the following are to apply to the school board:

- (1) Provides that the St. George Community School Board is to be composed of seven members who are elected from single-member districts.
- (2) Requires that, in order to qualify as a candidate for the school board, the proposed candidate must meet the qualifications for office that are provided for in present law for all school boards. Specifies that each member of a local school board must be able to read and write. Provides qualifications relative to age, residency, and domicile.
- (3) Provides that each member of the St. George Community School Board is to be elected at the time and place provided by law generally for local school board members. Provides that the members of the St. George Community School Board are to be elected at least one year immediately following the effective date of proposed law and will assume office as otherwise provided by law generally for local school board members. Provides that such school board members and their successors in office are to serve for four-year concurrent terms. Provides also that vacancies on the board are to be filled as provided by law generally for local school boards.
- (4) Provides that the organization, powers, duties, functions, and responsibilities of the St. George Community School Board and the board members' compensation and reimbursement for expenses will be as provided by law generally for local school boards. Requires the school board to adopt rules, regulations, and procedures consistent with law to effectuate

proposed law and to administer the duties, functions, and responsibilities of the board.

Proposed law, with respect to the property to be transferred from the EBR Parish School Board to the St. George Community School Board, provides that all of the following are to apply:

- (1) Provides that on the date such actual operation begins and thereafter, all lands, buildings, improvements, facilities, and other property having title vested in the public and subject to management, administration, and control by the EBR Parish School Board for public education purposes but located within the geographic boundaries of the St. George Community School System or used to provide student transportation services to such facilities are to be transferred to, managed, administered, and controlled by the St. George Community School Board.
- (2) The St. George Community School System and the EBR Parish School System shall develop a transportation plan or develop a plan for transferring school buses from the fleet owned and operated by the EBR Parish School System to the St. George Community School System.
- (3) Requires the EBR Parish School System to provide extended school year services, through August 31, 2027, to public and nonpublic school students residing within the geographic boundaries of the St. George Community School System who qualified to receive such services prior to June 30, 2027.

Proposed law provides, with respect to property tax collections and funding for the St. George Community School System, that all of the following apply:

- (1) That the EBR Parish School System and any taxing district created by such school system is to be the recipient of all sales and use taxes levied for school purposes collected within the geographic boundaries of the St. George Community School System collected that is remitted by the tax collector through June 30, 2027. Provides that beginning on July 1, 2027, the sales and use tax collectors are to remit all sales and use taxes levied for school purposes collected within the geographic boundaries of the St. George Community School System, including delinquent payments, to the St. George Community School System.
- (2) Provides that the EBR Parish School System is to receive all ad valorem and property taxes levied for school purposes collected within the geographic boundaries of the St. George Community School System and remitted by the tax collector through June 30, 2027. Provides that beginning July 1, 2027, the tax collector is to remit all ad valorem and property taxes levied for school purposes collected within the geographic boundaries of the St. George Community School System, including delinquent payments, to the St. George Community School System.
- (3) Provides that as is consistent with La. Constitution, no state monies are to be used to discriminate or to have the effect of discriminating and failing to provide an equal educational opportunity for all students.

Proposed law provides that, with respect to the relationship between the EBR Parish School Board and the St. George Community School Board, that all of the following are required:

- (1) The EBR Parish School Board is to work cooperatively and collaboratively with the interim and elected St. George School Board to effect the transfer of the students, buildings and other facilities, property, instructional materials, buses, and all other assets related to the schools located within the geographic boundaries of the new school system in an efficient and expeditious manner.
- (2) The EBR Parish School Board is to provide the St. George interim school board with immediate and complete access to:
  - (a) All school buildings and facilities associated with the schools located within the boundaries of the St. George Community School System. Such access is to include making the school buildings and facilities to be transferred available, free of charge, to the interim and elected school boards for purposes of conducting board and community meetings and other functions and activities related to the operation of the new school system.
  - (b) All student records and any other student related files associated with students enrolled in the schools to be transferred to the St. George Community School System.
  - (c) All financial records associated with the schools to be transferred, including those related to building maintenance, taxes, insurance, and indebtedness.
- (3) The EBR Parish School Board will not interfere, or impede in any way, with the processes to transfer the students, buildings and other facilities, property, instructional materials and equipment, buses, and all other assets related to the schools located within the geographical boundaries of the St. George Community School System.
- (4) The EBR Parish School Board will not sell, transfer, or otherwise remove any asset or thing of value, movable or immovable, corporeal or incorporeal, attributable to the schools to be transferred to the St. George Community School System prior to such transfer.
- (5) The EBR Parish School Board will not incur, transfer, or assign any debt or other responsibility or obligation to schools to be transferred to the St. George Community School System that is not properly attributable to such schools.

Proposed law requires that the creation of the St. George Community School System is not to have a negative impact on the MFP allocation to school systems. Provides that beginning in the fiscal year of July 1, 2027, and continuing for the next four fiscal years, the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) will identify the districts in parishes other than EBR on which the creation of the St. George Community School System causes a negative impact and determine the amount of the negative impact on the MFP per pupil allocation. BESE is to withhold the total of the amounts of the negative impact on all districts in parishes other than EBR from the total MFP

allocation to the St. George Community School System and transfer those funds on a per pupil basis to such districts.

Proposed law provides that if the establishment or the operation of the St. George Community School System results in the elimination of one or more positions within the Louisiana School Employees' Retirement System for specific reasons, the St. George Community School System is to remit funds for that portion of the unfunded accrued liability to the retirement system.

Proposed law provides that the St. George School system is obligated to reimburse the EBR School System for a percentage of the costs of the postemployment benefits, such as health insurance, for any EBR retiree that the St. George Community School System rehires. Requires that the annual payments are to be made via the "St. George Schools Legacy Benefit Trust for Retirees of the EBR Parish School System" that is established in accordance with present law. Provides that the percentage amount that the St. George School System owes to EBR is to be based upon the percentage of students that enroll in the newly created St. George School System from the prior year total of the students enrolled in the EBR School System. Provides that St. George is to make annual payments to trust and the trust is to make quarterly payments to the EBR School System. Provides that, in the event that it is determined that the funds on deposit in the trust are actuarially sufficient to pay the costs of the legacy benefits due to individuals who retired from the EBR Parish School System prior to the effective date of this proposed law, the obligation for St. George to make further payments to the trust ceases.

Proposed law requires that the EBR Parish Educational Facilities Improvement District provide to the St. George School Board, no later than June 1, 2027, a schedule of values for any construction completed within the boundaries of the St. George Community School System with the proceeds of Qualified School Construction Bonds issued prior to the effective date of proposed law, an accounting of payments made and to be made through the effective date of proposed law, on the construction bonds, and a payment schedule showing the unpaid principal and interest due for said projects. Provides that, beginning on July 1, 2027, the St. George Community School System is to reimburse the EBR Parish Educational Facilities Improvement District an amount equal to the percentage of the debt service paid in the preceding fiscal year attributable to the construction completed within the boundaries of the St. George Community School District. The reimbursement shall be made to EBR Parish Educational Facilities Improvement District within 30 days of receipt by the St. George Community School District of payment confirmation for the debt service attributable to construction completed within the boundaries of the St. George Community School System.

Proposed law provides that the EBR School System and the St. George Community School System shall enter into an agreement with respect to the transfer of students between the school district that does all of the following:

- (1) Allows any student who is domiciled in St. George to enroll and attend a school in the adjoining school district of EBR Parish, pursuant to present law.
- (2) Provides that any student who resides within the boundaries of the St. George Community

School System shall be allowed to enroll in any charter school located within the EBR School System, subject to the approval of BESE.

- (3) Provides that any student who is living within the geographic boundaries of the St. George Community School System is to be allowed to attend any EBR school magnet program, without regard to attendance zones, so long as the student meets the selective admission's requirements and maintains the academic standards of the magnet program.
- (4) Provides that any student who is living within the geographic boundaries of the EBR School System shall be allowed to attend any magnet program that is located within the boundaries of the St. George Community School System, without regard to attendance zones, so long as the student meets the selective admission's requirements and maintains the academic standards of the magnet program.
- (5) Provides that any new applicant to a magnet program or a charter school is not displaced by any student who is already on the waiting list to attend that magnet program or charter school, regardless of where the student resides in EBR Parish.
- (6) Provides that the school which accepts a student that is transferred in compliance with the agreement shall receive the local per pupil and the state MFP funds so that the money follows that student to the school of the parents' choice.

Proposed law provides that, with the exception of qualified students who are allowed to attend magnet programs or charter schools, nothing in proposed law is to be construed to interfere with either school systems' attendance zones.

Proposed law provides that on July 1, 2027, the St. George Community School Board shall assume the jurisdiction over the existing charter schools located within its boundaries that were authorized by the EBR School System prior to the effective date of the proposed law.

With respect to charter schools that are located within the boundaries of the St. George Community School System, all of the following shall apply:

- (1) An existing charter operator, at their option, may renegotiate the terms of the contract with St. George Community School System or petition to be authorized by BESE in order to accept students from both school systems. If the existing charter chooses not to renegotiate the terms of the exiting charter, then the terms of the charter which were authorized by the EBR school system prior to the effective date of proposed law are to remain in effect until the expiration of the charter.
- (2) After the effective date of proposed law, all applications for a new charter school to be located within the boundaries of the St. George Community School System shall be made to the St. George Community School Board.

Proposed law provides that any high school student residing within the geographic boundaries of the St. George Community School System or the EBR School System may elect to remain enrolled in

the high school that the student was attending on the effective date of proposed law, until such time as the student graduates from high school. Such student shall be included in the membership count for the school system in which he is enrolled for all purposes, including state funding through the MFP.

Proposed law provides that any elementary or secondary school student that resides within the geographic boundaries of the St. George Community School System or the EBR School System may elect to remain enrolled in the school that the student was attending on the effective date of proposed law for the two school years that occur after the effective date of proposed law. Such student shall be included in the membership count for the school system in which he is enrolled for all purposes, including state funding through the MFP.

Proposed law is effective if and when a proposed amendment to the La. Constitution is adopted at a statewide election that authorizes the St. George Community School System, as created in this proposed law.

Effective if and when a proposed amendment to Art. III, Sec. 13(D) of the Const. of Louisiana is adopted at a statewide election granting the St. George Community School System certain authority granted to parishes relative to a parish school system.

(Adds R.S. 17:58.2(J), 68.1-68.6; repeals R.S. 17:58.2(I) and 67-67.4)

#### Summary of Amendments Adopted by Senate

##### Senate Floor Amendments to engrossed bill

1. Adds a requirement to remit funds for a portion of the unfunded accrued liability attributable to an eliminated position in certain circumstances resulting from the operation of the St. George Community School System, in addition to its initial establishment.