



## Citizens for Educational Choice

### 2022 Education Related Mid-Session Review

#### Overview

In terms of overview, this session is moving toward a significant dialogue about public and private education using Education Savings Accounts, a move to remove the non-public school appointee to the BESE Board, vaccine information request at enrollment and an attempt to privatize school nutrition services.

- **HB 1 Rep. Zeringue** (Houma) was passed with all dollar amounts remaining the same for the last three years for Required Services, School Lunch Salary Supplements and Textbooks. There was an additional 4.1 million for 250 Scholarship slots. This is a disappointment. We have advocated hard for an increase in Required Services to no avail and realize the 25% reimbursement is not acceptable. However, it still has to get through the Senate and we will continue to advocate.
- **HB 4 Rep. Tarver** (Lake Charles) to eliminate the Governor's Appointee to the BESE Board. CEC testified at House Education Committee to oppose; sent out a Voter Voice Action Alert and will testify again in the Senate Committee to oppose.
- **HB 98 Rep. Magee** (Houma) to improve the accountability system where reporting is only required if the scholarship population is 25% or more moved out of House Education and now in Senate Education.
- **HB 47 Rep. Edmonston** (Baton Rouge) to require exemption letter to be included in communication has been amended to not require the exemption letter. However, there is still language to require non-public schools to accept a written dissent letter, according the RS 17:170, but I am getting legal opinion on this statute.
- **HB 250 Rep. Magee** (Houma-Thibodeaux) to allow Ecole Point au Chen to receive funding through the Education Excellence Fund is moving quickly.
- **HB 495 Rep. Schlegel** (New Orleans) to require suicide prevention training in public schools. However, Rep Schlegel was asked by Rep. Mincey (Baton Rouge) inquired about programs in non-public schools.
- **HB 986 Rep. Edmonds** (Baton Rouge) would move toward privatization of the school nutrition programs. Although it is billed as just "filling gaps" mainly in the afterschool programs, the concern from non-public school coordinators is that this could open the door to total privatization. We are working with the School Nutrition Association for amendments to only allow for afternoon snacks and to fill gaps.
- **SB 192 Sen. Boudreaux** (Lafayette) which creates a Postsecondary Education Fund for students with intellectual disabilities is moving fast.



- **SB 126 Sen. Cathey** (Shreveport) to allow University Lab Schools has been amended to include only if the school has obtained all the facilities and classrooms and is authorized by the board of supervisors with jurisdiction.
- **SB 203 Sen. Hewitt** (New Orleans) creates an education saving account for an average of \$5500 for a full range of math and reading curriculum if the student is not reading at level at end of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.
  - There was testimony by Dr. Brumley that 60% of students are not reading grade at level. The average is about \$5500 from the MFP and about \$7,000 from locals. There was robust discussion about all the existing reading programs available but this passed out of Senate Education easily.
  - Senator Fields commented that this may “open the gates” as there are several house bills related to bullying, exceptional children and a total open enrollment to all public schools to use ESA’s.
  - Opposition was very critical of the Scholarship Program as not working with no accountability and the DOE is already addressing the literacy crisis through 40 million dollars of funding and training on the Science of Reading to all teachers.
- **Other:** Some of the other bills we are monitoring include bills related to Tuition Assistance, Non-BESE approved teachers, posting materials on websites, minimum qualification for non-public school teachers and criminal history background checks for teacher certifications.

## Conclusion

As this session progresses, we will continue to advocate. I would be aware that DOE is already preparing as if Education Savings Accounts will happen and how they will set up their website to provide these for parents to access. This debate will be intense, I am sure.