

Regular Session, 2014

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 173

BY REPRESENTATIVE COX

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To urge and request the Board of Regents and the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE), in collaboration with the Patrick F. Taylor Foundation, the Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance, each public postsecondary education management board, the Louisiana Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, the Louisiana Department of Economic Development, the Louisiana Workforce Commission, the Louisiana Association of Business and Industry, the Council for a Better Louisiana, the Louisiana School Counselors Association, the Louisiana Association of School Superintendents, the Louisiana Association of Educators, the Louisiana Federation of Teachers, the Associated Professional Educators of Louisiana, the Louisiana School Boards Association, Stand for Children-Louisiana, the Louisiana Black Alliance for Educational Options, the parent of a high school student selected by the president of BESE, the parent of a college student selected by the chairman of the Board of Regents, and any other person or entity the Board of Regents and BESE deem appropriate, to study certain issues relative to the Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS) and to submit a written report of findings and conclusions, including any recommendations for related legislation, to the House Committee on Education and the Senate Committee on Education not later than sixty days prior to the beginning of the 2015 Regular Session of the Legislature of Louisiana.

WHEREAS, current law provides for the Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS) as a program of merit scholarships for students attending certain postsecondary education institutions who meet a specific grade point average, ACT score, and core curriculum requirements and certain other qualifications; and

WHEREAS, there is a need to create a better alignment between the abilities of college graduates and the needs of business and industry; and

WHEREAS, there is some concern that many students are not equipped with the knowledge they need in terms of qualifying for initial TOPS eligibility, maintaining such eligibility throughout college, and pursuing courses of study that will best enable them to have successful careers in Louisiana; and

WHEREAS, sustaining a well-educated, highly skilled, and productive workforce is critical to the economic growth of this state; and

WHEREAS, every effort must be made to address the current and future workforce needs of the state and to empower TOPS recipients to succeed both in college and in the workforce.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request the Board of Regents and the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE), in collaboration with the Patrick F. Taylor Foundation, the Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance, each public postsecondary education management board, the Louisiana Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, the Louisiana Department of Economic Development, the Louisiana Workforce Commission, the Louisiana Association of Business and Industry, the Council for a Better Louisiana, the Louisiana School Counselors Association, the Louisiana Association of School Superintendents, the Louisiana Association of Educators, the Louisiana Federation of Teachers, the Associated Professional Educators of Louisiana, the Louisiana School Boards Association, Stand for Children-Louisiana, the Louisiana Black Alliance for Educational Options, the parent of a high school student selected by the president of BESE, the parent of a college student selected by the chairman of the Board of Regents, and any other person or entity the Board of Regents and BESE deem appropriate, to study certain issues relative to the Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS), which shall include but need not be limited to the following:

(1) Measures that may be taken in order to align the granting of TOPS awards with the meeting of Louisiana's workforce needs.

(2) Facilitating the efforts of guidance counselors with respect to counseling students about TOPS before they enter high school and while they are in high school.

(3) Establishing a "Total Louisiana" workforce counseling program in which each high school student receives personalized guidance counseling on how his skills and aptitudes, as indicated by standardized tests and any other evaluation tool, best align with Louisiana employment opportunities, as indicated by the Louisiana Workforce Commission's evaluation of areas of economic growth, and a career plan is developed for the student such that the TOPS scholarship can be invested in an education path that meets the needs of Louisiana's economy and leads to lifelong employment and residency in Louisiana.

(4) The cost of TOPS thus far and projected future costs, degrees obtained by TOPS recipients, the number of TOPS recipients who lose their awards, and the number of TOPS recipients who do not graduate.

(5) Relative to TOPS-Tech, the feasibility of lowering the minimum ACT score required for initial eligibility and eliminating chemistry courses from the core curriculum required for initial eligibility.

(6) Relative to TOPS-Tech, the feasibility of allowing certain individuals who have received a general equivalency diploma to qualify for the award.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board of Regents and BESE shall submit jointly a written report of findings and conclusions, including any recommendations for related legislation, to the House Committee on Education and the Senate Committee on Education not later than sixty days prior to the beginning of the 2015 Regular Session of the Legislature of Louisiana.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a suitable copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the chairman of the Board of Regents, the president of the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, the commissioner of higher education, Phyllis M. Taylor, the executive director of the Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance, the chairman of each public postsecondary education management board, the president of the Louisiana Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, the secretary of the Louisiana Department of Economic Development, the executive director of the Louisiana Workforce Commission, and the respective presidents of the Louisiana Association of Business and Industry, the Council for a Better Louisiana, the Louisiana School Counselors Association, the Louisiana Association of School Superintendents, the Louisiana Association of

Educators, the Louisiana Federation of Teachers, the Associated Professional Educators of Louisiana, the Louisiana School Boards Association, Stand for Children-Louisiana, and the Louisiana Black Alliance for Educational Options.

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE