

House Committee on Education

Minutes of Meeting
2023 Regular Session
April 25, 2023

I. CALL TO ORDER

Representative Lance Harris, chairman of the House Committee on Education, called the meeting to order at 9:12 a.m. in Room 1, in the state capitol in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

II. ROLL CALL

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Representative Lance Harris, chairman
Representative Beryl A. Amedée
Representative Kendrick "Ken" Brass
Representative Julie Emerson
Representative Aimee Adatto Freeman
Representative Barbara Reich Freiberg
Representative Brett F. Geymann
Representative Patrick O. Jefferson, vice chairman
Representative Charles Anthony Owen
Representative Tammy T. Phelps
Representative Vincent "Vinney" J. St. Blanc, III
Representative Phillip Eric Tarver

MEMBERS ABSENT:

None

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Elizabeth L. Borne, legislative analyst
Lisa Lovello, legislative analyst
Alexandra Cravins, committee administrative assistant
Sarah Baker, committee assistant
Bryan Vincent, director

ADDITIONAL ATTENDEES PRESENT:

Myrtis Jarrell, sergeant at arms

III. BUSINESS

House Bill No. 462 by Representative Edmonds

Representative Edmonds presented House Bill No. 462, which requires public school governing authorities to post certain fiscal information on their websites.

Michael Faulk, Louisiana Association of School Superintendents, 2713 Indian Mound Boulevard, Monroe, LA 71201, (225) 229-6021, spoke in opposition to House Bill No. 462.

Representative Jefferson offered a motion to report House Bill No. 462 favorably. Without objection, House Bill No. 462 was reported favorably by a vote of 10 yeas and 0 nays. Representatives Harris, Amedée, Brass, Emerson, Freeman, Freiberg, Jefferson, Charles Owen, Phelps, and St. Blanc voted yea.

Witness cards submitted by those who did not speak are as follows: 13 in support, 5 in opposition, and 1 for information only. Witness cards are included in the committee records.

Statements submitted in accordance with House Rule 14.33 in lieu of appearing before the committee are as follows: 2 in support. Copies of these statements are included in the committee records.

House Bill No. 327 by Representative Seabaugh

Representative Seabaugh presented House Bill No. 327, which, relative to the Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS), provides that dependent children of parents living overseas meet TOPS residency requirements if certain conditions are met.

Dr. Sujuan Boutte, Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance/Louisiana Board of Regents, 602 North Fifth Street, Baton Rouge, LA, (225) 219-7294, spoke for information only on House Bill No. 327.

Representative Charles Owen offered a motion to report House Bill No. 327 favorably. Without objection, House Bill No. 327 was reported favorably by a vote of 9 yeas and 0 nays. Representatives Harris, Amedée, Brass, Emerson, Freiberg, Jefferson, Charles Owen, Phelps, and St. Blanc voted yea.

House Bill No. 98 by Representative Harris

Vice Chairman Jefferson in the chair.

Representative Harris presented House Bill No. 98, which creates and provides for a program to provide state funding for the education of students not enrolled in public school and expands the ability of parents to enroll children in the public school of their choice.

Representative Harris offered amendments that:

1. Added other expenses incurred in the education of the student to the list of qualified education expenses.
2. Revised the amount of the annual allocation to each account.
3. Allowed all unspent funds, rather than up to 50% of the total funds deposited into the account for the current school year, to remain in the account.
4. Added that nothing in proposed law shall be deemed to limit the independence or autonomy of any participating school or service provider.
5. Removed certain criteria relative to the provision of special education services by participating nonpublic schools.
6. Specified that Louisiana State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education study potential full-time and part-time participation of public school students in the proposed law scholarship program.

Representative Harris offered a motion to adopt the proposed amendments. Without objection, the amendments were adopted by a vote of 9 yeas and 0 nays. Representatives Harris, Amedée, Brass, Freiberg, Geymann, Jefferson, Charles Owen, Phelps, and St. Blanc voted yea.

Dr. Erin Bendily, Pelican Institute, 400 Poydras Street, New Orleans, LA 70130, spoke in support of House Bill No. 98.

Kim Carver, Gulf Coast Bank, 7 Carriage Lane, Mandeville, LA 70471, (504) 450-9326, spoke in support of House Bill No. 98.

Ethan Melancon, Louisiana State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, 1201 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, spoke in support of House Bill No. 98.

Dr. Cade Brumley, Louisiana Department of Education, no address provided, spoke for information only on House Bill No. 98.

Chairman Harris in the chair.

Samantha Singletary, 434 Sandpiper Place, Sunset, LA 70584, (337) 442-7600, spoke in opposition to House Bill No. 98 and submitted a letter to committee members in opposition to House Bill No. 98, Exhibit A, which is included in the committee records.

Michael Faulk, Louisiana Association of School Superintendents, 2713 Indian Mound Boulevard, Monroe, LA 71201, (225) 229-6021, spoke in opposition to House Bill No. 98.

Patty Glaser, Discovery Schools, 3901 Lake Ridge Drive, Metairie, LA 70002, (504) 913-7812, spoke in opposition to House Bill No. 98.

Corhonda Corley, Step Up For Action, 8815 Wilmore Drive, Zachary, LA 70791, (225) 654-0671, spoke in opposition to House Bill No. 98.

Troy Sledge, Step Up For Action, 827 Sumner Street, no city or state given, (504) 510-1607, spoke in opposition to House Bill No. 98.

Representative Freiberg offered a motion to report House Bill No. 98 with amendments, to which Representative Phelps objected. The administrative assistant called the roll, and House Bill No. 98 was reported with amendments by a vote of 7 yeas and 4 nays. Representatives Harris, Amedée, Emerson, Freiberg, Geymann, Charles Owen, and St. Blanc voted yea. Representatives Brass, Freeman, Jefferson, and Phelps voted nay.

Witness cards submitted by those who did not speak are as follows: 14 in support, 40 in opposition, and 1 for information only. Witness cards are included in the committee records.

House Bill No. 9 by Representative Butler

Representative Butler presented House Bill No. 9, which creates and provides for a program to provide state funding for the education of students with exceptionalities not enrolled in public school.

Representative Harris offered amendments that removed household income from the list of student eligibility criteria, and added that nothing in proposed law shall be deemed to limit the independence or autonomy of any participating school or service provider.

Representative Harris offered a motion to adopt the proposed amendments. Without objection, the amendments were adopted by a vote of 9 yeas and 0 nays. Representatives Harris, Amedée, Brass, Emerson, Freiberg, Jefferson, Charles Owen, Phelps, and St. Blanc voted yea.

Tish Johnson, 2232 Beaver Road, Ville Platte, LA 70586, (337) 523-0544, spoke in support of House Bill No. 9.

Dr. Erin Bendily, Pelican Institute, 400 Poydras Street, New Orleans, LA 70130, spoke in support of House Bill No. 9.

Ethan Melancon, Louisiana State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, 1201 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, spoke in support of House Bill No. 9.

Corhonda Corley, Step Up For Action, 8815 Wilmore Drive, Zachary, LA 70791, (225) 654-0671, spoke in opposition to House Bill No. 9.

Michael Faulk, Louisiana Association of School Superintendents, 2713 Indian Mound Boulevard, Monroe, LA 71201, (225) 229-6021, spoke in opposition to House Bill No. 9.

Representative Emerson offered a motion to report House Bill No. 9 with amendments. Without objection, House Bill No. 9 was reported with amendments by a vote of 12 yeas and 0 nays. Representatives Harris, Amedée, Brass, Emerson, Freeman, Freiberg, Geymann, Jefferson, Charles Owen, Phelps, St. Blanc, and Tarver voted yea.

Witness cards submitted by those who did not speak are as follows: 12 in support, and 8 in opposition. Witness cards are included in the committee records.

Statements submitted in accordance with House Rule 14.33 in lieu of appearing before the committee are as follows: 2 in support. Copies of these statements are included in the committee records.

House Bill No. 164 by Representative Cox

Representative Cox presented House Bill No. 164, which lowers the minimum ACT score required for initial qualification for a TOPS-Tech Award from 17 to 15.

Dr. Sujuan Boutte, Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance, 602 North Fifth Street, Baton Rouge, LA, (225) 219-7294, spoke for information only on House Bill No. 219.

Belinda Davis, 4540 Hyacinth Avenue, Baton Rouge, LA 70808, (225) 202-2698, spoke in support of House Bill No. 164.

Dr. Erin Bendily, Pelican Institute, 400 Poydras Street, New Orleans, LA 70130, spoke in opposition to House Bill No. 164.

Katie Alexander, Louisiana Citizen Advocacy Group, 1380 Steele Boulevard, Baton Rouge, LA 70806, (225) 408-9498, spoke in opposition to House Bill No. 164.

Ethan Melancon, Louisiana State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, 1201 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, spoke in opposition to House Bill No. 164.

Representative Charles Owen offered a motion to report House Bill No. 164 favorably, to which Representative Freiberg objected. The administrative assistant called the roll, and House Bill No. 164 was reported favorably by a vote of 8 yeas, 3 nays, and 1 abstention. Representatives Brass, Emerson, Freeman, Geymann, Jefferson, Charles Owen, Phelps, and St. Blanc voted yea. Representatives Amedée, Freiberg, and Tarver voted nay. Representative Harris abstained.

Witness cards submitted by those who did not speak are as follows: 9 in support, and 7 in opposition. Witness cards are included in the committee records.

House Bill No. 68 by Representative Hodges

Representative Hodges presented House Bill No. 68, which authorizes public high schools to offer a course of instruction in the history and literature of the Bible.

Ethan Melancon, Louisiana Department of Education, 1201 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, spoke for information only on House Bill No. 68.

Dr. Will Hall, Louisiana Baptist Office of Public Policy, 1250 MacArthur Drive, Alexandria, LA 71303, (318) 449-4348, spoke in support of House Bill No. 68.

Chris Alexander, Louisiana Citizen Advocacy Group, 1380 Steele Boulevard, Baton Rouge, LA 70806, (225) 332-6434, spoke in support of House Bill No. 68.

Brandi Melissa, P.O. Box 1171, Baton Rouge, LA 70821, spoke in opposition to House Bill No. 68.

Rodney Braxton, East Baton Rouge Parish Public Schools, 543 Spanish Town Road, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 381-0166, spoke in opposition to House Bill No. 68.

Representative Amedée offered a motion to report House Bill No. 68 favorably, to which Representative Freeman objected. The administrative assistant called the roll, and House Bill No. 68 was reported favorably by a vote of 7 yeas and 4 nays. Representatives Harris, Amedée, Emerson, Geymann, Charles Owen, St. Blanc, and Tarver voted yea. Representatives Brass, Freeman, Freiberg, and Jefferson voted nay.

Witness cards submitted by those who did not speak are as follows: 16 in support, and 5 in opposition. Witness cards are included in the committee records.

Statements submitted in accordance with House Rule 14.33 in lieu of appearing before the committee are as follows: 10 in support. Copies of these statements are included in the committee records.

House Bill No. 117 by Representative Freeman

Representative Freeman presented House Bill No. 117, which requires public schools to provide free menstrual products in easily accessible locations.

Brandi Melissa, P.O. Box 1171, Baton Rouge, LA 70821, spoke in support of House Bill No. 117.

Lacey Gero, Alliance for Period Supplies, 215 34th Street, New Orleans, LA 70124, (757) 784-3637, spoke in support of House Bill No. 117.

Deidra Mwalimu, Network of Women NOW, 132 Maximillian Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, (225) 502-3965, spoke in support of House Bill No. 117.

Representative Freeman offered a motion to report House Bill No. 117 favorably. Without objection, House Bill No. 117 was reported favorably by a vote of 10 yeas and 0 nays. Representatives Harris, Amedée, Emerson, Freeman, Freiberg, Geymann, Jefferson, Charles Owen, St. Blanc, and Tarver voted yea.

Witness cards submitted by those who did not speak are as follows: 50 in support. Witness cards are included in the committee records.

Statements submitted in accordance with House Rule 14.33 in lieu of appearing before the committee are as follows: 22 in support. Copies of these statements are included in the committee records.

House Bill No. 219 by Representative Charles Owen

Representative Charles Owen presented House Bill No. 219, which provides relative to the application for federal student aid with respect to the Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS).

Vice Chairman Jefferson in the chair.

Dr. Sujuan Boutte, Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance/Louisiana Board of Regents, 602 North Fifth Street, Baton Rouge, LA, (225) 219-7294, spoke for information only on House Bill No. 219.

Chairman Harris in the chair.

Representative Charles Owen offered a motion to report House Bill No. 219 favorably. Without objection, House Bill No. 219 was reported favorably by a vote of 10 yeas and 0 nays. Representatives Harris, Amedée, Emerson, Freiberg, Geymann, Jefferson, Charles Owen, Phelps, St. Blanc, and Tarver voted yea.

Witness cards submitted by those who did not speak are as follows: 6 in support. Witness cards are included in the committee records.

House Resolution No. 10 by Representative Amedée

Representative Amedée presented House Resolution No. 10, which requests that the state Department of Education revise the proposed early learning and development standards and submit its version to the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education for consideration.

Paige Lowry, Moms for Liberty, 4488 North Flannery Road, Baton Rouge, LA 70814, (225) 348-3248, spoke in support of House Resolution No. 10.

Chris Alexander, Louisiana Citizen Advocacy Group, 1380 Steele Boulevard, Baton Rouge, LA 70806, (225) 337-6434, spoke in support of House Resolution No. 10.

Katie Alexander, Louisiana Citizen Advocacy Group, 1380 Steele Boulevard, Baton Rouge, LA 70806, (225) 408-9498, spoke in support of House Resolution No. 10.

Bert Callais, 363 Saint Francis Street, Brusly, LA 70719, (225) 776-3004, spoke in support of House Resolution No. 10.

RuthAnne Oakey-Frost, Louisiana Policy Institute for Children, P.O. Box 13552, New Orleans, LA 70185, (801) 725-4557, spoke in opposition to House Resolution No. 10.

Belinda Davis, 4540 Hyacinth Avenue, Baton Rouge, LA 70808, (225) 202-2698, spoke in opposition to House Resolution No. 10.

Ethan Melancon, Louisiana State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, 1201 North Third Street, Baton Rouge, LA 70802, spoke in opposition to House Resolution No. 10.

Representative Amedée offered a motion to report House Resolution No. 10 favorably, to which Representative Freiberg objected. The administrative assistant called the roll, and House Resolution No. 10 was reported favorably by a vote of 6 yeas, 5 nays, and 1 abstention. Representatives Amedée, Emerson, Geymann, Charles Owen, St. Blanc, and Tarver voted yea. Representatives Brass, Freeman, Freiberg, Jefferson, and Phelps voted nay. Representative Harris abstained.

Witness cards submitted by those who did not speak are as follows: 18 in support, and 13 in opposition. Witness cards are included in the committee records.

IV. ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements.

V. ADJOURNMENT

Representative Tarver offered a motion to adjourn. Without objection, the motion passed by a vote of 12 yeas and 0 nays. Representatives Harris, Amedée, Brass, Emerson, Freeman, Freiberg, Geymann, Jefferson, Charles Owen, Phelps, St. Blanc, and Tarver voted yea.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chairman Lance Harris
House Committee on Education

Date adopted: