

2015 Regular Session

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 209

BY REPRESENTATIVE WESLEY BISHOP

A RESOLUTION

To urge and request the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, in collaboration with the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council, to study issues relative to the high school graduation rates for special education students in Louisiana and to submit a written report of study findings and recommendations to the House Committee on Education by not later than January 15, 2016.

WHEREAS, the Constitution of Louisiana provides that it is the goal of the public educational system "to provide learning environments and experiences, at all stages of human development, that are humane, just, and designed to promote excellence in order that every individual may be afforded an equal opportunity to develop to his full potential"; and

WHEREAS, according to *Education Week's* "Diplomas Count 2015" annual report, Louisiana's special education graduation rates were among the worst in the United States in 2013; and

WHEREAS, the report reveals that only thirty-seven percent of the special education students enrolled in Louisiana public high schools graduated with a diploma – trailing regular education students by over thirty-five percent; and

WHEREAS, the report also showed that on average across the United States, special education students had a nineteen point graduation deficit compared to regular education students; and

WHEREAS, special education students in high school are increasingly expected to perform to high academic standards and to prepare for further education or training and a productive role in the workplace; and

WHEREAS, in 2014, Act No. 833 was enacted by the legislature to provide alternative pathways for grade promotion and graduation for certain special education students who do not pass standardized tests; and

WHEREAS, according to advocates for special education students and for this legislation, this law represented a major shift in policy and a monumental departure from being among the states with the most stringent and restrictive policies for grade promotion and graduation to joining many states in recognizing the role a student's Individualized Education Program should have in determining student outcomes; and

WHEREAS, this effort was a collaborative approach by parents of special education students, special education administrators, policymakers, and advocacy organizations who worked together to ensure that each student has the opportunity to maximize his potential and earn a diploma; and

WHEREAS, although this legislation was a large step in the right direction in providing special education students this opportunity and providing them with proper recognition of their achievements, further study is needed in order to determine the reasons for the state's low graduation rate for these students and further solutions for increasing the rate.

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, in collaboration with the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council, to study issues relative to the high school graduation rates for special education students in Louisiana and to submit a written report of study findings and recommendations to the House Committee on Education by not later than January 15, 2016.

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

- (1) The reasons for Louisiana's low graduation rate for special education students.
- (2) Ways to improve the graduation rate.
- (3) Any policies or further legislation that may be necessary to address these issues.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution shall be transmitted to the president of the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, the state superintendent of education, and the executive director of the Louisiana Developmental Disabilities Council.

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES