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Legislation Would Reform Missouri School Accountability to Focus on Student Growth and Achievement, While Providing Parents More Transparency into How Schools are Performing

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. Missouri State Senator Curtis Trent (R-Springfield) has pre-filed the Quality Education Act, Senate Bill 804. State Representative Mike Haffner (R-Pleasant Hill) will file a companion bill in the coming days. The legislation would reform Missouri's school performance assessment to primarily measure student growth and achievement, while providing parents more transparency into how individual schools are succeeding in providing a quality education. Missouri student academic outcomes are now below the national average and have been declining steadily since 2009, with significant gaps based on a student's race and family income.

Only 3 in 10 Missouri students can read proficiently by the 4th grade, yet 99% of Missouri school districts are "Fully Accredited" under the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's (DESE) accountability system.

"The academic growth of students is the truest measure of whether our schools are delivering a high-quality education and yet in Missouri it only accounts for 24 percent of a school's performance rating," said Rep. Mike Haffner. "We can see in our neighboring states that prioritize student growth why Missouri is falling behind in providing a quality education to our next generation of leaders. It's past time to pass the Quality Education Act so we can start measuring what matters and rewarding the teachers and schools that are moving kids forward in their academic performance."

Currently, student growth, which measures the academic improvement students make over the course of a school year, and is considered by education experts to be the truest measure of school quality, only accounts for 24% of a school's Annual Performance Report (APR) in Missouri. Student achievement also accounts for 24% of a district's APR score.

Under the Quality Education Act, 50% of a K-8 school's performance rating would be based on student academic growth and 50% would be based on student achievement outcomes.

Sixty percent of a Missouri high school's performance rating would be measured by student growth and college and career readiness, while student achievement and graduation rates would make up the remaining 40%.

DESE's current K-12 public school accountability system also fails to provide parents and communities with clear and accessible information into school performance. Under the Quality Education Act, all Missouri public schools would receive a report card that clearly describes how the school compares with statewide outcomes in student growth, achievement, graduation rates, and college and career readiness. The report card will be easily accessible on DESE's website and each school's website.

"In a world where information is increasingly at our fingertips, Missouri makes it very difficult for parents to determine if their local schools are providing a quality education," said Sen. Curtis Trent. "The frustrating part is that it's within DESE's power right now to give parents and taxpayers more clear, accessible information on how well schools are educating students and they have so far failed to do so. By passing the Quality Education Act, we can bring much needed transparency to our public schools, while prioritizing student growth and achievement, instead of rewarding schools for filling out paperwork."

According to the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP,) often referred to as the Nation's Report Card, Missouri scored in the top half of all states in the key categories of 4th and 8th grade math and reading back in 2009. By 2022, Missouri students had dropped in every single category and were now in the bottom half of all states. Meanwhile, the neighboring states of Illinois, Iowa and Tennessee, which all weigh student growth greater than Missouri, moved up the state rankings in every one of these key education metrics.

| | Missouri | | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| | Percent of Students Proficient | | | |
| ALL STUDENTS | 2009 State Ranking | 2019 State Ranking | 2022 State Ranking | 2009 to 2022 Change in Rank |
| Grade 4 Reading | 11 | 28 | 35 | Moved down 24 places |
| Grade 4 Math | 21 | 29 | 28 | Moved down 7 places |
| Grade 8 Reading | 15 | 24 | 32 | Moved down 17 places |
| Grade 8 Math | 23 | 28 | 28 | Moved down 5 places |