

## Support lacking for bill on special needs students, private schools

By Mary Sell Montgomery Bureau | Posted: Tuesday, April 5, 2016 4:04 pm

MONTGOMERY — A bill that would give parents of children with special needs state money to attend non-public schools hit a roadblock in the Alabama House today.

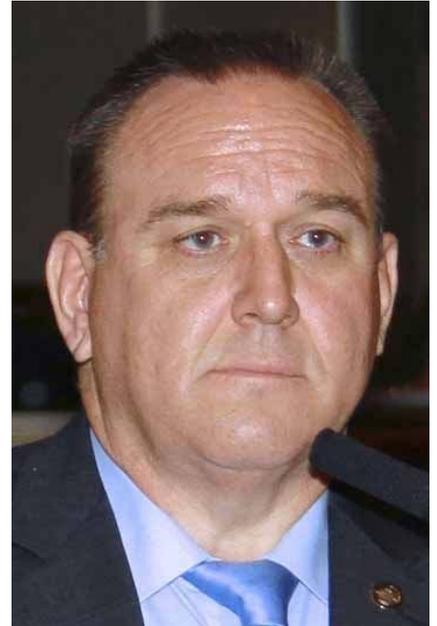
House Bill 84, sponsored by Rep. Ken Johnson, R-Moulton, would create an Education Savings Account program. Johnson said in some cases it may be difficult for systems, including small, rural ones, to address the needs of students with disabilities.

Opponents of the bill, including the Alabama State Department of Education and several education groups, have compared the bill to the Alabama Accountability Act. That act was passed in 2013 and gives a tax credit to parents leaving public schools for private ones. They've also said the state money isn't enough to help poor families, only middle-class ones.

The bill failed today to get enough support on a procedural vote and debate was ended.

Johnson said he's not sure if he'll try to bring the bill back up for another vote.

The bill caps new enrollment in the program at 1,000 new students per year. A fiscal note said it would cost the Education Trust Fund about \$4.7 million the first year, then could grow from there based on new enrollment. Johnson said that 10 percent of state dollars would stay with local systems.



Johnson