

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 1918
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Public Education
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Interested parties note the challenges facing new teachers, teachers at struggling schools, and teachers asked to teach unfamiliar subjects. H.B. 1918 seeks to assist these teachers by creating a professional development grant program that would cover the cost of tuition at certain institutions of higher education for qualifying teachers to take courses in the subject they teach.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE IMPACT

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly create a criminal offense, increase the punishment for an existing criminal offense or category of offenses, or change the eligibility of a person for community supervision, parole, or mandatory supervision.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the commissioner of education and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in SECTION 1 of this bill.

ANALYSIS

H.B. 1918 amends the Education Code to require the commissioner of education to make available to an authorized provider from funds appropriated for the purpose grants to pay the tuition and any required fees for eligible teachers who enroll in an online professional development course that complies with certain requirements and is provided through the authorized provider. The bill defines an "authorized provider" as a public, private, or independent institution of higher education that is approved to offer an educator preparation program and offers online through an Internet portal at least 100 subject-specific professional development courses at levels prekindergarten through grade 12. The bill defines an "eligible teacher" as a classroom teacher who is providing instruction at any level of prekindergarten through grade 12 during the teacher's first year of teaching, in a subject for which the teacher does not possess a bachelor's degree with an academic major or minor in that subject, or at a campus assigned an overall performance rating of D or F.

H.B. 1918 requires a professional development course, to qualify for such a grant, to cover the subject and level of student instruction for which the eligible teacher enrolled provides instruction; to require enrollment for the fall and spring semesters; to require the teacher to be administered a preliminary test and, on completion of the course, a final test; to provide a printed and electronic version of a teacher manual for student instruction that includes certain materials; and to be provided in conjunction with the assignment as a mentor a teacher who has experience in teaching the subject and grade level of the course in which the eligible teacher is enrolled and using the same student instruction materials provided by the course. The bill requires an authorized provider to determine when a teacher applies for enrollment in such a course whether the teacher is an eligible teacher. The bill establishes that a teacher who successfully completes a professional development course earns the equivalent of one-half of the continuing education credit hours required for certification renewal of the class of certificate the teacher holds.

H.B. 1918 authorizes an authorized provider to enroll each eligible teacher and submit a request for grant money to the commissioner in the amount of the tuition and any required fees for both semesters of the course. The bill requires the commissioner to distribute grant money to authorized providers based on the date on which each individual request is received by the commissioner and, if the commissioner receives more requests for grant money than the amount of money appropriated, to select the requests to be paid on the last date for which grant money is available based on a policy adopted by rule by the commissioner. The bill makes such a decision final and prohibits its appeal. The bill prohibits the commissioner from apportioning grant money among the requests.

H.B. 1918 authorizes the commissioner to audit the records of an authorized provider to ensure compliance with the bill's provisions and requires an authorized provider on request by the commissioner to provide the commissioner with all relevant records necessary to conduct a compliance audit. The bill requires the commissioner and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to adopt rules as necessary to implement and administer the bill's provisions.

EFFECTIVE DATE

On passage, or, if the bill does not receive the necessary vote, September 1, 2017.