

BILL ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 3298
By: Allison
Public Education
Committee Report (Substituted)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Computer science and coding skills are in strong demand in the Texas job market. However, despite ample job openings and a high median salary, too few Texas students were exposed to computer science curriculum in the most recent school year. C.S.H.B. 3298 seeks to ensure students in Texas develop knowledge and skills in computer science by providing for the creation of the computer science strategic advisory committee and a biennial reporting requirement.

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 this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 3298 amends the Education Code to require the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to establish the computer science strategic advisory committee as a permanent TEA advisory committee to develop and provide recommendations for increasing computer science instruction and participation in public schools. The bill sets out the composition, appointment, operation, and compensation of the advisory committee and requires TEA to appoint a TEA employee to support the advisory committee. The bill requires the advisory committee, not later than January 1 of each odd-numbered year, to submit to the governor and the legislature a report that includes recommended changes to state law, including funding proposals and timelines for the implementation of the recommended changes. The report must include recommendations that are intended to do the following:

- increase the number of certified computer science teachers;
- increase the number of public high schools offering computer science courses;
- increase the number of high school students enrolled in computer science courses;
- encourage the enrollment of diverse student populations in computer science courses; and
- expand computer science learning opportunities, including computer programming, computer coding, cybersecurity, and computational thinking, in public schools.

C.S.H.B. 3298 requires the State Board of Education, not later than December 31, 2022, to review and revise, as needed, the Texas essential knowledge and skills of the technology applications curriculum for kindergarten through grade eight.

C.S.H.B. 3298 repeals previous legislation which sets out the implementation of provisions regarding certain technology applications curriculum and establishes a computer science strategic advisory committee based on money appropriated by the legislature specifically for the implementation.

C.S.H.B. 3298 repeals Section 5, Chapter 1149 (H.B. 2984), Acts of the 86th Legislature, Regular Session, 2019.

EFFECTIVE DATE

On passage, or, if the bill does not receive the necessary vote, September 1, 2021.

COMPARISON OF ORIGINAL AND SUBSTITUTE

While C.S.H.B. 3298 may differ from the original in minor or nonsubstantive ways, the following summarizes the substantial differences between the introduced and committee substitute versions of the bill.

The substitute does not include the original's provisions creating the computer science and technology applications professional development grant program.

The original provided for the expiration of the advisory committee, whereas the substitute includes a specification that the advisory committee is a permanent TEA advisory committee. With regard to the required report of the advisory committee, the substitute makes the report biennial instead of a one-time report prior to the advisory committee's expiration.

The original required TEA staff members to provide administrative support for the advisory committee, whereas the substitute requires the appointment of a TEA employee to support the advisory committee.

The substitute does not include the following, which were present in the original:

- an authorization for funds available for the grant program, as created by the original, to be used to cover the cost of the administrative and operational expenses of the advisory committee; and
- a requirement for the commissioner of education to establish that grant program not later than December 31, 2021.