

SUBJECT: Creating a parental involvement division in TEA

COMMITTEE: Public Education — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 7 ayes — Sadler, Dutton, Hernandez, Hochberg, Price, Rhodes, Uher
0 nays
2 absent — Culberson, Williamson

WITNESSES: For — Sandy Kibby, Texas Parent Teachers Association
Against — None

DIGEST: CSHB 583 would require the commissioner of education to create a parental involvement division within the Texas Education Agency and to consolidate all programs regarding parent involvement into this division by January 1, 1998. The division would have to develop, implement, and administer programs and activities to encourage and maintain parental involvement in public schools.

The phone number of the parental involvement division would have to be printed on the campus report cards that TEA provides to parents each year. The report card would also have to list the phone number at the agency to call for information about assessment tests. These phone numbers would have to be listed on report cards for the 1997-98 school year and thereafter.

CSHB 583 would also allow school districts to spend money on purposes, rather than goods and services, they find necessary in the conduct of public schools.

CSHB 583 would take effect September 1, 1997.

SUPPORTERS SAY: CSHB 583 would establish in statute a program that has already been initiated by the education commissioner, but needs to be expanded to be fully effective. In November 1995, the commissioner created within TEA a parental involvement and community empowerment unit, which has successfully promoted parental involvement. However, activities related to

parental involvement are still not centralized within the agency, and there is no designated place for parents to call when they have questions.

CSHB 583 would address this problem by consolidating parent involvement programs within TEA, and requiring the division to print its phone number on campus report cards. The division would help support parent involvement in a variety of ways, such as serving as a clearinghouse for information for PTAs and other parent organizations, answering questions and informing parents about the role of campus advisory committees and training educators on ways to get parents more involved in schools.

The bill would also clarify that school boards have the authority to use local funds for citizenship and scholarship awards to students. A recent attorney general's opinion determined that revisions made to SB 1 removed school boards' authority to fund these awards. This was an inadvertent change that can be easily corrected.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

CSHB 583 should not mandate that the education commissioner create an entire division devoted to parental involvement. The commissioner should have the flexibility to determine how to organize the agency and the level of resources that should be supplied to this area. The current parental involvement program is working well. The unit has a toll-free number for parents to call, and a full-time staff member devoted to parental involvement issues.

NOTES:

The committee substitute added the requirements that the phone numbers of the parental involvement division and the assessment center be listed on the campus report card. The substitute also added the provision allowing school districts to spend money on purposes rather than goods and services.