

SUBJECT: Technology-based pilot program for rural schools

COMMITTEE: Public Education — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 6 ayes — Eissler, Branch, Delisi, Hochberg, Olivo, Patrick

0 nays

3 absent — Zedler, Dutton, Mowery

WITNESSES: For — Salem Abraham, Canadian ISD; Bill Grusendorf, Texas Association of Rural Schools (*Registered, but did not testify*): Ramiro Canales, Texas Association of School Administrators; Elena Lincoln, Association of Texas Professional Educators

Against — None

DIGEST: HB 2864 would require the Texas Education Agency to establish a pilot program that would award state grants to finance technology-based supplemental instruction to students in grades 6-12 in rural schools with an enrollment of less than 5,000 students.

A campus selected to participate in the program would receive grants of up to \$200 per student per school year in each eligible grade level. The grants would have to be used to provide technology-based supplemental instruction for students at eligible grade levels. These could include research-based instructional support; teacher training; academic tutoring or counseling; and Internet-based distance learning that was aligned with state standards or offers college credit in English language arts, social studies, mathematics, science, and languages other than English.

As a condition of receiving a grant, a campus would have to contribute at least \$100 per student per year for each student in an eligible grade level. This additional funding could consist of local, private or state funds other than grant funds for this program. For high school programs, the high school allotment could be used for this funding.

Participating campuses would have to make instructional support services available at least ten hours per week outside of regular school hours.

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TEA would have to use up to \$4 million of appropriated funds to cover the cost of the program. TEA would have to use up to \$150,000 per year to contract for an evaluation of the program's effectiveness. TEA would have to deliver an interim report containing the results of the evaluation by December 1, 2008, and a final report to the Legislature by December 1, 2010.

The program would expire September 1, 2011.

The bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house. Otherwise, it would take effect September 1, 2007.

NOTES: According to the fiscal note, HB 2864 would cost \$8,150,000 in general revenue in fiscal 2008-09.