

SUBJECT: Grants for the construction and renovation of high school science labs

COMMITTEE: Public Education — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 6 ayes — Eissler, Zedler, Branch, Hochberg, Olivo, Patrick
0 nays
3 absent — Delisi, Dutton, Mowery

SENATE VOTE: On final passage, April 25 — 29-0

WITNESSES: For — (*Registered, but did not testify:* Ramiro Canales, Texas Association of School Administrators; Daniel T. Casey, Texas School Alliance; Fast Growth School Coalition; David Duty, Texas Association of School Boards; Bill Grusendorf, Texas Association of Rural Schools; Lindsay Gustafson, Texas Classroom Teachers Association; Elena Lincoln, Association of Texas Professional Educators; Ken McCraw, Texas Association of Community Schools; Martin Peña, South Texas Association of Schools; Patty Quinzi, Texas Federation of Teachers)

Against — None

BACKGROUND: Education Code, sec. 28.025, directs the State Board of Education to establish three levels of curriculum requirements for high school graduation: the minimum, recommended, and advanced curriculum. To graduate, high school students must complete the recommended or advanced curriculum requirements unless the student's parents or guardian and school administrators agree that the student should be able to take courses under the minimum high school program.

HB 1 by Chisum, 79th Legislature, third called session, increased from three to four the number of science courses a student must complete in order to complete the recommended or advanced high school curriculum.

DIGEST: SB 1700 would require TEA to establish a competitive grant program for school districts to construct or renovate high school science laboratories. TEA could adopt rules governing eligibility, application procedures, and

accountability for the use of grant funds. Grants would have to limit costs to \$200 per square foot for construction projects or \$100 per square foot for renovation projects.

To be eligible for a grant, school districts would have to demonstrate that existing science laboratories were insufficient to comply with the recommended and advanced curriculum requirements. Grants would be awarded based on a ranking of school districts by wealth per student, with low-wealth districts receiving priority.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2007.

NOTES:

According to the fiscal note, the grant program in HB 1700 would cost the state approximately \$21 million in general revenue-related funds in fiscal 2008-09.