

- SUBJECT:** Grants for school-based health centers
- COMMITTEE:** Public Education — favorable, without amendment
- VOTE:** 9 ayes — Eissler, Hochberg, Allen, Aycock, Farias, Jackson, Olivo, Patrick, Shelton
- 0 nays — None
- 2 absent — Dutton, Weber
- WITNESSES:** For — (*Registered, but did not testify:* Portia Bosse, Texas State Teachers Association; Steven Bristow, Parkland Health and Hospital System, Harley Eckhart, Texas Elementary Principals & Supervisors Association; Monty Exter, Association of Texas Professional Educators; Lindsay Gustafson, Texas Classroom Teachers Association; Lisa Kimmey-Walker, Memorial Herman Healthcare System, Texas Association of School Based Health Care Centers; Noelita Lugo, Texans Care for Children; James Willmann, Texas Nurses Association; Lynda Woolbert, Coalition for Nurses in Advanced Practice)
- Against — None
- On — (*Registered, but did not testify:* Anita Wheeler, Department of State Health Services)
- BACKGROUND:** The Department of State Health Services administers an annual competitive grant program to award grants over three years to establish school-based health centers, with preference to rural school districts and those with low property wealth. A school district must contribute an amount equal to the grant awarded, and no school district may receive more than \$250,000 in a biennium.
- School-based health centers collaborate with local medical providers and community organizations to provide medical, mental health, and dental health care to students and their family members, regardless of a family's ability to pay for services. A center medical professional may treat a student once a parent or guardian has given permission.

The state has about 200 school-based health centers, most of which are housed in a permanent facility on campus.

**DIGEST:** HB 281 would lengthen from three to five years the time over which DSHS grants would be awarded for school-based health centers. Local health departments, hospitals, and nonprofit organizations that contract with school districts to establish or maintain a school-based health center also would be eligible for grants.

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, 2009.

**SUPPORTERS SAY:** HB 281 would benefit new school-based health centers by lengthening the time over which grant money was dispensed, allowing a longer period of time to establish other sources of revenue. By making local health departments, hospitals, and nonprofit organizations eligible for grants, the bill would provide an incentive for them to collaborate with school districts to serve uninsured and underserved people.

The bill would help expand school-based health centers, which improve student academic performance and attendance by providing preventative care, asthma management, flu shots, and vaccines, and by reducing the number of emergency room visits and hospitalizations. The bill would help to enhance parental involvement, make the school a welcoming place, and provide an opportunity to address psychological or family issues a student may be experiencing by providing professional counseling. The bill would not change the existing requirement that students may be treated only with parental consent.

**OPPONENTS SAY:** No apparent opposition.