

SUBJECT: Funding for child care assistance to students at risk of dropping out

COMMITTEE: Public Education — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 10 ayes — Aycock, Allen, J. Davis, Deshotel, Dutton, Farney, K. King,
Ratliff, J. Rodriguez, Villarreal

0 nays

1 absent — Huberty

WITNESSES: For — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Jennifer Allmon, Texas Catholic Conference; Portia Bosse, Texas State Teachers Association; Ramiro Canales, Texas Association of School Administrators; Jesus Chavez, Texas School Alliance; Sarah Crockett, Texas Association for Infant Mental Health; Monty Exter, Association of Texas Professional Educators; Ray Freeman, Equity Center; Lindsay Gustafson, Texas Classroom Teachers Association; Dwight Harris, Texas American Federation of Teachers; Anita Jiles, Texas Elementary Principals & Supervisors Association; Janna Lilly, Texas Council of Administrators of Special Education; Louann Martinez, Dallas ISD; Ken McCraw, Texas Association of Community Schools; Jordan Michalik, Texas Association of Goodwills; Susan Milam, National Association of Social Workers/Texas Chapter; Don Rogers, Texas Rural Education Association; Julie Shields, Texas Association of School Boards; Amanda Thomas, Texas Charter Schools Association; Tamara Vannoy, Texas Afterschool Association; Chandra Villanueva, Center for Public Policy Priorities)

Against — None

On — (*Registered, but did not testify*: David Anderson, Texas Education Agency)

BACKGROUND: Education Code, sec. 42.152 establishes a compensatory education allotment for students who are educationally disadvantaged as measured by enrollment in the national school lunch program or in a remedial or support program because they are pregnant. Districts receive an adjustment to the basic allotment for each student served under compensatory education.

School districts generally must use the funds for supplemental programs and services designed to improve student performance on state assessments and to help students who are at risk of dropping out stay in school.

DIGEST:

HB 580 would allow school districts to use compensatory education allotment funding to provide child-care services or assistance with child-care expenses for students at risk of dropping out of school because they are parents.

Schools could use the funds to provide child care on campus or to pay for outside day care. Funds also could be used to transport children of students and the students themselves to and from the campus or day care.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2013.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

HB 580 would provide school districts with more flexibility in how they used state compensatory education allotment funds to assist students at risk of dropping out of school because of a lack of child care. The bill would add child-care expenses to the categories of items a district could pay for with these funds. School districts would not be required to provide child-care assistance but would have the option to use a portion of state compensatory education funding for that purpose.

Parenthood is a leading cause of school dropout among teen girls. Having access to day care that is dependable, safe, and affordable would allow them to concentrate on their studies rather than worry about finding reliable child care. By permitting districts to use state compensatory education funds for child care, school districts could increase the number of at-risk students who were able to graduate and continue to college or find jobs that allowed them to provide for the needs of their children.

Some districts have been struggling to provide child care since state budget cuts in fiscal 2012-13 ended the Life Skills Program for Teen Parents grant program. In fiscal 2010-11, the Texas Education Agency received \$17.7 million for that program, which distributed grants to school districts that agreed to provide local matching funds. Child care was one allowable use for the grants, although the money could not be used only for child care expenses. In fiscal 2012-13, the program received no appropriations.

Some school districts lost up to \$400,000 to use toward child care and other needs after the Life Skills program ended. While some districts have continued to provide child care, finding alternative funding has become an onerous task. HB 580 would provide a more reliable source of funding.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

Compensatory education funds were designed to provide accelerated reading instruction, mentoring, and other programs that help improve student performance. These funds should not be diverted for child care expenses.

Districts that want to provide child care could find money within their budgets, help students apply for workforce commission grants, or partner with outside sources to continue offering child care.

NOTES:

The companion bill, SB 314 by Uresti, was referred to the Senate Education Committee on February 5.