

SUBJECT: Modifying school instruction time from days into minutes

COMMITTEE: Public Education — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 8 ayes — Aycock, Bohac, Deshotel, Dutton, Farney, Galindo, González, K. King

0 nays

3 absent — Allen, Huberty, VanDeaver

WITNESSES: For — (*Registered, but did not testify:* Berhl Robertson, Jr., Lubbock ISD; Jimmy Parker, Lubbock Roosevelt ISD; Keith Bryant, Lubbock-Cooper ISD; Trent Townsend, SeptStart; Christie Goodman, Six Flags; Mike Motheral, Small Rural School Finance Coalition; Casey McCreary, Texas Association of School Administrators; Doug Williams, Texas Association of School Administrators; Brian Sullivan, Texas Hotel and Lodging Association; Christy Rome, Texas School Coalition; Ron Hinkle, Texas Travel Industry Association; Homero Lucero, Texas Travel Industry Association; Monty Exter, the Association of Texas Professional Educators)

Against — Kristi Hassett, Lewisville ISD School Board

On — (*Registered, but did not testify:* Drew Scheberle, Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce; Lisa Dawn-Fisher, Texas Education Agency)

BACKGROUND: Education Code, sec. 25.081 requires school districts to provide at least 180 days of instruction to students each school year, except if the school district operates on a year-round calendar or offers a flexible year program. The commissioner of education may approve a reduced number of instructional days if an extreme weather event or another calamity causes schools to close.

Currently, when schools close due to severe weather and the commissioner does not approve reduced instructional days, they must

make up lost instructional days by adding days to the school calendar and extending the school year into summer. If school districts were to count instructional time by minutes instead of days, lost instructional time could be added to a regular school day, which would permit districts to make up lost time without extending classes into the summer.

DIGEST:

CSHB 2610 would modify how a school district counted instructional time for the school year by requiring a minimum of 75,600 minutes of instruction, including intermission and recess, instead of the current minimum of 180 days. The bill also would define one day of instruction to be equal to 420 minutes.

The commissioner could approve reduced minutes of instruction if certain extreme weather or another calamity caused schools to close. If the commissioner did not approve fewer instructional minutes for a school district, the district could add additional minutes to its normal school hours as necessary, with additional instructional minutes compensating for the time lost due to bad weather or other extraordinary events.

This bill would prohibit a school district from scheduling its last day of school for students before May 15, with an exception for the Texhoma school district, which is also subject to Oklahoma law.

This bill would apply beginning with the 2015-2016 school year, and the commissioner could adopt rules to implement the bill.

This 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, 2015.