

- SUBJECT:** Prohibiting enrollment limitations on dual credit courses
- COMMITTEE:** Public Education — favorable without amendment
- VOTE:** 10 ayes — Aycock, Allen, Bohac, Deshotel, Farney, Galindo, González, Huberty, K. King, VanDeaver
- 0 nays
- 1 absent — Dutton
- WITNESSES:** For — Robin Painovich, Career and Technology Association of Texas; Pam Reece; (*Registered, but did not testify:* David Anderson, Arlington ISD Board of Trustees; Drew Scheberle, Austin Chamber of Commerce; Robert Schneider, Austin ISD Board of Trustees; Mike Meroney, Huntsman Corporation, Sherwin Alumina, Co.; Ted Melina Raab, Texas American Federation of Teachers; Nelson Salinas, Texas Association of Business; Barry Haenisch, Texas Association of Community Schools; Amy Beneski, Texas Association of School Administrators; Grover Campbell and Dominic Giarratani, Texas Association of School Boards; Lindsay Gustafson, Texas Classroom Teachers Association; Ellen Arnold, Texas PTA; Colby Nichols, Texas Rural Education Association; Maria Whitsett, Texas School Alliance; Portia Bosse, Texas State Teachers Association; Julie Cowan)
- Against — None
- On — Aubrey Wynn Rosser, Greater Texas Foundation; (*Registered, but did not testify:* Von Byer and Monica Martinez, Texas Education Agency)
- BACKGROUND:** Education Code, sec. 28.009(a) requires school districts to implement a program under which students may earn the equivalent of at least 12 semester credit hours of college credit in high school. That credit may be earned through advanced placement (AP) courses, international baccalaureate courses, local and statewide articulated courses, or dual credit courses.

19 Texas Administrative Code, Part 1, Ch. 4, subch. D, §4.85(b)(8) limits high school juniors and seniors to enrolling in no more than two dual credit courses per semester. The rule allows exceptions for high school students with demonstrated outstanding academic performance and approval by their high school principal and the chief academic officer of the college to enroll in a maximum of 15 semester credit hours.

The administrative rules, under §4.85(i), allow public institutions of higher education to waive all or part of the tuition and fees for high school students enrolled in dual credit courses. The rules stipulate that state funding for dual credit courses is available both to public school districts and to colleges based on current funding rules of the State Board of Education and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

DIGEST: HB 505 would prohibit the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board from adopting a rule that would limit the number of dual credit courses or hours in which a high school student could enroll each semester or academic year. The rules also could not limit the total number of dual credit courses or hours in which a high school student could enroll while in high school.

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, and would apply beginning with the 2015-16 school year.

SUPPORTERS SAY: HB 505 would help high school students be better prepared for college and the workforce by removing the current limit on the number of dual credit courses they can take. Students enrolled in dual credit courses simultaneously may earn credit toward a high school diploma and a college degree or certificate. Removing limits on how many dual credit courses students could take would allow them to earn a higher education degree in less time and save on tuition costs.

The Legislature has established early college high schools to give students the opportunity to graduate with a high school diploma and an associate's

degree. However, of 3,263 high schools in the state, only 110 are early college high schools. Students in the majority of high schools should have similar opportunities to earn substantial college credit, and HB 505 would be a step toward this goal.

Students can earn college credit through AP courses but only if they achieve certain scores on AP exams. Even students who pass AP courses still may opt out of the exam or may score too low to receive college credit. In contrast, students who enroll in dual credit courses receive college credit upon passing a class. A 2011 study on dual credit courses in Texas prepared for the Texas Education Agency (TEA) found that 94 percent or more of students across different subject areas passed their dual credit courses. HB 505 would enable students to earn more credit through the state's highly successful dual credit offerings.

In addition, students would save on tuition costs by taking more dual credit courses in high school, when tuition often is waived by the college or paid by the school district. High tuition costs make college less accessible, and removing limits on dual credit courses would expand opportunities for students who otherwise may not be able to afford higher education.

This bill also would continue the work of HB 5 by Aycock, enacted by the 83rd Legislature in 2013, which allows students who take additional or specific courses to earn endorsements in one of five areas of study. HB 505 would help students earn endorsements by expanding their opportunity to enroll in college courses that may not be offered at their local high schools.

To enroll in dual credit courses, students already must demonstrate college readiness, as measured by the Texas Success Initiative or equivalent performance metrics. This existing requirement would prevent students from overloading their course schedule with difficult college courses. Academically prepared students could take three or four dual credit courses per semester without being overloaded, allowing them to earn considerable college credit in advance and save money.

OPPONENTS
SAY:

HB 505 could lead to students overloading their course schedules with rigorous college courses and could result in unanticipated costs and consequences for the students and their families. For example, while tuition might be waived for the courses, students still could incur costs for textbooks and commuting to area community colleges. In addition, students might be unaware when they enroll that some dual credit courses count toward the calculation of the student's college grade point average.

Increased enrollment in dual credit courses also could raise costs to the state and limit the supply of these offerings. The fiscal note anticipates some additional higher education formula costs beginning in fiscal 2018 due to an increase in dual credit students at higher education institutions. Furthermore, enrollment increases could lead to an inadequate supply of certain courses or courses in certain locations, according to a 2011 report on dual credit courses prepared for TEA. The current limits on dual credit course enrollment should remain in place to avoid these negative consequences.

NOTES:

According to the Legislative Budget Board's fiscal note, HB 505 could result in additional higher education formula costs beginning in fiscal 2018 due to an increase in dual credit students at institutions of higher education, but these costs are not considered significant.

SB 1159 by Estes, the Senate companion bill, has been referred to the Senate Education Committee. SB 13 by Perry, passed by the Senate on March 30, contains a provision with identical language to HB 505.