

- SUBJECT:** Awarding high school credit to Windham School District students
- COMMITTEE:** Corrections — favorable, without amendment
- VOTE:** 7 ayes — Murphy, J. White, Allen, Keough, Krause, Schubert, Tinderholt
- WITNESSES:** For — Ellen Arnold, Texas Association of Goodwills; Douglas Smith, Texas Criminal Justice Coalition; Derek Cohen, Texas Public Policy Foundation; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Edwin Ortiz, Association of Texas Professional Educators; Traci Berry, Goodwill Central Texas; Cathy Dewitt, Texas Association of Business; Lori Henning, Texas Association of Goodwills)
- Against — None
- On — Paul Brown and Clint Carpenter, Windham School District
- BACKGROUND:** The Education Code contains provisions for the education and training of offenders housed in Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) facilities under the Windham School District, which was established by the Texas Board of Corrections in 1969. The Windham School District establishes and operates schools at various facilities of TDCJ and is required to provide educational programs designed for individuals who have not graduated high school. The district also offers career and technical education programs. The goals of the Windham School District include reducing recidivism and increasing the employability of former offenders upon release.
- DIGEST:** HB 618 would enable students in the Windham School District to earn credit toward the academic, career and technology, or other course requirements for high school graduation. Students would need to successfully complete educational programs offered by the district, and the programs offered would need to meet academic standards set by the State Board of Education.

The bill would enable students to earn a high school diploma from the

Windham School District if the student successfully completed all state curriculum requirements and achieved satisfactory performance on the state assessments required for graduation. A student receiving special education services could graduate under modified requirements outlined in the student's individualized education program.

If a student were unable to achieve satisfactory performance on the state assessment instruments required for graduation but successfully completed necessary coursework, the bill would allow the district to issue a certificate of coursework completion to the student.

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.