

SUBJECT: Updating TEA public outreach materials and extending their availability

COMMITTEE: Public Education — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 11 ayes — Huberty, Bernal, Allen, Bohac, Deshotel, Dutton, Gooden, K. King, Koop, Meyer, VanDeaver

0 nays

WITNESSES: For — (*Registered, but did not testify:* Marlene Lobberecht, League of Women Voters of Texas; Dwight Harris and Ted Melina Raab, Texas American Federation of Teachers (AFT); Barry Haenisch, Texas Association of Community Schools; Amy Beneski, Texas Association of School Administrators; Grover Campbell, Texas Association of School Boards)

Against — None

On — (*Registered, but did not testify:* Kara Belew and Monica Martinez, Texas Education Agency)

BACKGROUND: Education Code, sec. 28.015 requires the Texas Education Agency to develop and make available to school districts public outreach materials that explain curriculum changes made through HB 5 by Aycock, enacted by the 83rd Legislature in 2013, which introduced new graduation requirements for public high schools. The public outreach materials also must include information on the top 10 percent program, the TEXAS Grant program, the Texas Educational Opportunity Grant Program, and the Texas B-On-time loan program. Sec. 28.015 expires September 1, 2018.

The 84th Legislature in 2015 enacted HB 700 by Giddings to phase out the Texas B-On-time loan program, which provided zero-interest loans and loan forgiveness to eligible students who graduated within a certain timeframe.

DIGEST: HB 264 would extend the requirement that the Texas Education Agency make available to school districts certain public outreach materials until September 1, 2020, rather than 2018. The bill also would remove the requirement that the agency include information on the Texas B-On-time loan program in the materials.

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, 2017.

SUPPORTERS SAY: HB 264 would require the Texas Education Agency to provide to school districts certain informational materials for an additional two years, which would give counselors more time to use the resource in their interactions with parents and students. The endorsement tracks created under HB 5 in 2013 are still relatively new, and counselors have received training on them only since 2015. Extending the period during which these informational materials remained available would help counselors assist parents in understanding how the recently created endorsement tracks work as their child navigates high school.

The Texas B-On-time program is no longer available for incoming students, and removing information about the program from informational materials would help avoid confusion.

OPPONENTS SAY: No apparent opposition.

NOTES: A companion bill, SB 1850 by Garcia, was referred to the Senate Committee on Education on March 23.