

SUBJECT: Establishing the Texas Commission on Public School Finance

COMMITTEE: Public Education — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 9 ayes — Huberty, Bernal, Allen, Bohac, Deshotel, Gooden, K. King, Koop, Meyer

0 nays

2 absent — Dutton, VanDeaver

SENATE VOTE: On final passage, May 4 — 31-0

WITNESSES: For — (*Registered, but did not testify:* David Anderson, Arlington ISD Board of Trustees; Mark Wiggins, Association of Texas Professional Educators; Drew Scheberle, Austin Chamber of Commerce; Chandra Villanueva, Center for Public Policy Priorities; Chris Masey, Coalition of Texans with Disabilities; Jodi Duron, Elgin ISD; Kristi Hassett and Kronda Thimesch, Lewisville ISD; Paige Duggins, MALDEF; Leticia Van de Putte and Ian Randolph, Pharr-San Juan-Alamo ISD; Jesus Chavez, South Texas Association of Schools; Dwight Harris and Ted Melina Raab, Texas American Federation of Teachers; Barry Haenisch, Texas Association of Community Schools; Julie Linn, Texas Association of Realtors; Bill Grusendorf and John Hubbard, Texas Association of Rural Schools; Amy Beneski, Texas Association of School Administrators; Grover Campbell, Texas Association of School Boards; Michelle Smith, Texas Association of School Business Officials; Michael Barba, Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops; Veronica Garcia, Texas Charter Schools Association; David Hinojosa, Texas Latino Education Coalition; Kyle Ward, Texas PTA; Christy Rome, Texas School Coalition; Paul Colbert; Kristi Morrison; Columba Wilson)

Against — None

On — (*Registered, but did not testify:* Kara Belew, Leonardo Lopez, and Al McKenzie, Texas Education Agency)

DIGEST: SB 2144 would establish the Texas Commission on Public School Finance to develop and make recommendations for improvements to the current public school finance system or for new methods of financing public schools.

Commission membership. The commission would be composed of 15 members:

- four members appointed by the governor;
- three members appointed by the lieutenant governor;
- three members appointed by the House speaker;
- the chair of the Senate Education Committee, or a representative designated by the chair;
- the chair of the Senate Finance Committee, or a representative designated by the chair;
- the chair of the House Public Education Committee, or a representative designated by the chair;
- the chair of the House Appropriations Committee, or a representative designated by the chair; and
- a member of the State Board of Education, as designated by the chair of that board.

The governor would designate the presiding officer of the commission. In making appointments, the governor, lieutenant governor, and House speaker would be required to coordinate to ensure that the membership of the commission reflects, to the extent possible, the ethnic diversity of the state and included at least one of each of the following representatives:

- an administrator in the public school system or an elected member of the board of trustees of a school district;
- a member of the business community; and
- a member of the civic community.

Commission members would not be entitled to compensation for their

service, but they would be entitled to reimbursement for actual and necessary expenses incurred in performing commission duties.

Texas Education Agency (TEA) staff would be required to provide administrative support for the commission. TEA would receive funding for the commission's administrative and operational expenses by appropriation.

Recommendations. The commission would develop recommendations to address issues related to the public school finance system, including:

- the purpose of the public school finance system and the relationship between state and local funding in that system;
- the appropriate levels of local maintenance and operations and interest and sinking fund tax effort necessary to implement a public school finance system that complies with the requirements under the Texas Constitution; and
- policy changes to the public school finance system necessary to adjust for student demographics and the geographic diversity of Texas.

The commission could establish one or more working groups composed of not more than five members to study, discuss, and address specific policy issues and recommendations to refer to the commission for consideration.

Report. By December 31, 2018, the commission would be required to prepare and deliver a report to the governor and the Legislature that recommended statutory changes to improve the public school finance system, including any funding adjustments to account for student demographics.

Public meetings and information. The commission could hold public meetings as needed to fulfill its duties under the bill and would be subject to open meetings and public information requirements.

The commission would be abolished January 8, 2019.

Effective date. 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.