

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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S.B. 713
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Education
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AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

School counselors play an essential role in ensuring students' success throughout K-12 education and beyond. Unfortunately, counselors, especially those serving at-risk students, are often stretched too thin. It is recommended that all schools have a student-to-counselor ratio of 250-to-1. According to the National Association for College Admission Counseling, Texas' K-12 student-per-counselor ratio in 2009-2010 was 437-to-1. Current law provides that public schools need only employ one counselor for every 500 elementary school students.

S.B. 713 requires that a school district employ at least one certified counselor for every 300 students in the district. A subsection introduced by S.B. 713 provides that schools districts would be entitled to additional state aid sufficient to assist the district in employing the number of certified counselors required by the bill. This subsection will expire September 1, 2017.

As proposed, S.B. 713 amends current law relating to the employment of certified counselors by school districts.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the commissioner of education in SECTION 2 (Section 42.2519, Education Code) of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Section 33.002, Education Code, as follows:

Sec. 33.002. CERTIFIED COUNSELOR. (a) Requires the commissioner of education (commissioner), in distributing to programs under this subchapter (School Counselors and Counseling Programs) funds appropriated for the purpose or other funds that are authorized to be used for the purpose, to give preference to the districts that have the highest concentration of students at risk of dropping out of school, as described by Section 29.081 (Compensatory, Intensive, and Accelerated Instruction), rather than to a school district that received funds under this subsection for the preceding school year and then to the districts that have the highest concentration of students at risk of dropping out of school, as described by Section 29.081. Provides that funds distributed under this subsection are in addition to any other funds available for programs under this subchapter, including funds provided under Section 42.2519. Deletes existing text providing that this section applies only to a school district that receives funds as provided by this subsection.

(b) Requires a school district with 300 or more students in enrollment to employ a counselor certified under the rules of the State Board For Educator Certification (SBEC) for each school in the district, rather than requiring a school district with 500 or more students enrolled in elementary school grades to employ a counselor certified under the rules of SBEC for each elementary school in the district. Requires a school district to employ at least one counselor for every 300 students, rather than for every 500 elementary school students, in the district.

(c) Requires a school district with fewer than 300 students in enrollment to provide guidance and counseling services to students, rather than requiring a school district with fewer than 500 students enrolled in elementary school grades to provide guidance and counseling services to students, by meeting certain criteria.

SECTION 2. Amends Subchapter E, Chapter 42, Education Code, by adding Section 42.2519, as follows:

Sec. 42.2519. ADDITIONAL STATE AID FOR CERTIFIED COUNSELORS. (a) Entitles a school district, for each school year, from funds that are authorized to be used for the purpose, to state aid in an amount, as determined by the commissioner, sufficient to assist the district in employing the number of certified counselors required by Section 33.002.

(b) Provides that the amount of state aid to which a school district is entitled under this section is in addition to the amount of revenue to which the district is entitled under Section 42.2516(b) (relating to a certain formula which determines the amount of state revenue to which a school district is entitled). Provides that this subsection expires September 1, 2017.

(c) Requires the commissioner to adopt rules as necessary to administer this section.

SECTION 3. Provides that this Act applies beginning with the 2013-2014 school year.

SECTION 4. Effective date: September 1, 2013.