

BILL ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 244
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Public Education
Committee Report (Substituted)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Despite job opportunities and a high median wage in the field of computer science, few Texas high school students took a computer science course in the most recent school year. One possible barrier to success in this area is the lack of knowledge and guidance from teachers on the opportunities available in computer science. In fact, there has been a shortage of teachers certified in this subject for the past two decades. C.S.H.B. 244 seeks to provide teachers the resources to obtain a computer science teaching certification and to continue professional development in coding, technology applications, cybersecurity, and computer science education by authorizing the commissioner of education to establish a professional development grant program.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE IMPACT

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly create a criminal offense, increase the punishment for an existing criminal offense or category of offenses, or change the eligibility of a person for community supervision, parole, or mandatory supervision.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the commissioner of education in SECTION 1 of this bill.

ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 244 amends the Education Code to authorize the commissioner of education to establish a competitive professional development grant program to encourage public school teachers to obtain computer science certification and continue their professional development in coding, computational thinking, cybersecurity, and computer science education. The bill authorizes the commissioner to award grants from any federal funds available for that purpose to eligible providers that offer the following:

- professional development for classroom teachers to ensure teachers maintain a working knowledge of current computer industry standard tools and resources; and
- training for computer science certification for teachers in accordance with state certification requirements.

The following are eligible providers if they meet additional eligibility standards established under commissioner rule:

- a public institution of higher education;
- a regional education service center;
- a public school district or partnership of multiple districts; and
- a nonprofit entity approved by the commissioner that has demonstrated experience in providing professional development through a statewide network.

C.S.H.B. 244 requires a grant recipient to do the following:

- provide the described training or professional development and establish professional development hubs in each education service center region;
- serve high-need campuses;
- have established partnerships with faculty with appropriate expertise at institutions of higher education; and
- develop partnerships with industry professionals.

C.S.H.B. 244 authorizes the commissioner to adopt rules as necessary to implement the bill's provisions.

EFFECTIVE DATE

On passage, or, if the bill does not receive the necessary vote, September 1, 2021.

COMPARISON OF ORIGINAL AND SUBSTITUTE

While C.S.H.B. 244 may differ from the original in minor or nonsubstantive ways, the following summarizes the substantial differences between the introduced and committee substitute versions of the bill.

The substitute authorizes the commissioner to establish the grant program and does not provide a specific deadline, whereas the original required the commissioner to establish the program by a specified deadline.

The substitute includes the professional development field of cybersecurity within the scope of the program, in addition to the fields included in the original. The substitute expands the intended beneficiaries of the program from elementary school and middle and junior high school teachers to all classroom teachers.

The substitute changes the funding source from specific appropriations, which were the source designated in the original, to any available federal funds and does not include the cap specified in the original on the total amount of grants awarded for a state fiscal biennium.