

**SUBJECT:** Revisions to the Communities In Schools dropout prevention program

**COMMITTEE:** Public Education — committee substitute recommended

**VOTE:** 8 ayes — Eissler, Zedler, Branch, Dutton, Hochberg, Mowery, Olivo, Patrick  
0 nays  
1 absent — Delisi

**WITNESSES:** For — Lori Krouskos, Communities in Schools of North Texas; Zana Gardner; (*Registered, but did not testify:* Jennifer Carr, Texas Catholic Conference, The Roman Catholic Bishops of Texas; Melody Chatelle, United Way Capital Area; Krista DelGallo, Texas Council on Family Violence; Harley Eckhart, Texas Elementary Principals and Supervisors Association; John Gasko, Texas Early Childhood Education Coalition; Gary Henderson, Communities in Schools of North Texas; Charlie McMurdie, Texas Association of Addiction Professionals; Ruby Ramos, Texans Care for Children; Jason Sabo, United Ways of Texas; Doug McDurham, Texas Association of Communities in Schools local programs)  
  
Against — Ray Freeman, Texas Association of Rural Schools, Itasca ISD; Wayne Pierce, Equity Center  
  
On — Ken McGraw, Texas Association of Community Schools; Mike Motheral, Texas Association of School Administrators

**BACKGROUND:** Education Code, ch. 33, subch. E, provides statutory authority for the Communities in Schools (CIS) dropout prevention program. It is overseen by the Texas Education Agency but is made up of 27 local nonprofit agencies that are funded through grants from TEA as well as federal grants, individual contributions, and other sources.  
  
The state director of CIS coordinates the efforts of CIS with other community service agencies and with public school personnel to provide services to students at risk of dropping out or who are engaging in delinquent conduct. The director also sets standards, promotes and

markets the program in communities in which a program is not established, and helps new programs develop a funding base.

**DIGEST:**

CSHB 1609 would create a new position within TEA of CIS commissioner and would direct TEA to direct \$30 million per year from the compensatory education allotment to provide funding for the CIS program.

The CIS commissioner would have to set standards for the program, including performance goals, objectives, and measures that considered improvement in student behavior, academic achievement, and promotion, graduation, retention, and dropout rates. Funds could be withheld from a program that consistently failed to meet these standards.

The CIS commissioner would have rulemaking authority over CIS policies concerning:

- TEA's responsibility in encouraging local businesses to participate in CIS programs;
- TEA's responsibility for obtaining information from participating school districts;
- the use of federal or state funds available to the agency for programs of this nature; and
- any other areas concerning the program identified by the commissioner.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2007.

**SUPPORTERS  
SAY:**

CSHB 1609 would provide a secure funding stream for an exemplary stay-in-school program that is the largest dropout prevention program in the state. With more than two million students at risk of dropping out, there is a critical need for school-based programs like Communities in Schools.

The bill would increase accountability by requiring CIS programs to adhere to specific outcome measures targeted towards academic achievement and would allow the education commissioner to shut down programs that were not performing well.

The bill would not divert money from other dropout prevention efforts because the "hold harmless" provisions of HB 1, 79th Legislature, third

called session, ensure school districts that they will receive the same level of funding as in the 2005-06 school year. Any money set aside from the compensatory allotment for CIS would be replaced with hold harmless funding.

OPPONENTS  
SAY:

If the "hold harmless" provisions were changed in the future, school districts could lose \$30 million or more per year in compensatory education funding that would have to be set aside for CIS. Some of the districts that would lose compensatory education funding do not have a CIS program and would not receive the benefit of these dropout prevention efforts.

The CIS program is operated independently by 27 non-profit organizations of varying quality that are not sufficiently accountable to the state. The program has not had a significant impact on dropout rates.

NOTES:

The committee substitute added provisions establishing a CIS commissioner and requiring the adoption of program policies and performance goals, objectives and measures.

According to the fiscal note, the bill would cost an additional \$28,738,048 in general revenue in fiscal 2008-09 to increase spending for CIS to at least \$30 million per year.

The companion bill, SB 127 by Shapleigh, passed the Senate by 30-1 (Nichols) on May 1.