

SUBJECT: Eligibility for public education grants

COMMITTEE: Public Education — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 7 ayes — Eissler, Zedler, Branch, Dutton, Hochberg, Olivo, Patrick
0 nays
2 absent — Delisi, Mowery

WITNESSES: For — Keith Bryant, Lamesa ISD and The Texas Association of Community Schools; Marcelo Cavazos, Arlington ISD; Robby Collins, Dallas ISD; Marsha Tucker, Roark Elementary School, Arlington ISD; (*Registered, but did not testify:* Amy Beneski, Texas Association of School Administrators; Portia Bosse, Texas State Teachers Association; Lindsay Gustafson, Texas Classroom Teachers Association; Elena Lincoln, Association of Texas Professional Educators; Julie Shields, Texas Association of School Boards

Against — None

On — Jamie Story, Texas Public Policy Foundation

BACKGROUND: The Public Education Grant (PEG) grant program was established in 1995 and allows students from certain schools to transfer to another public school in their own or any other school district. A student is eligible for a PEG if the student is assigned to a public school campus at which 50 percent or more of the students did not perform satisfactorily on a state-administered assessment instrument in any two of the preceding three years or a school that was found to be academically unacceptable under the state accountability system for the past three years.

For funding purposes, students using PEGs are included in the average daily attendance of the receiving district. School districts can reject an application for the student to attend a school but may not use criteria that discriminate on the basis of a student's race, ethnicity, academic achievement, athletic abilities, language proficiency, sex, or socioeconomic status. The school district in which a student resides must

provide free transportation from the school the student would have attended to the receiving school.

DIGEST: CSHB 2113 would specify that a student could qualify for a PEG or attend another school in the district if the student was assigned to a campus that was, at any time in the preceding two years, considered academically unacceptable under the state accountability system.

The bill would eliminate existing provisions specifying that a student qualifies for a PEG if, in the school in which the student would be assigned, 50 percent or more of students did not perform satisfactorily on state assessment instruments in the preceding two years.

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, 2007.

SUPPORTERS SAY: CSHB 2113 would make it easier to determine if a student was eligible for a Public Education Grant by establishing a clear standard that the student's current school was considered academically unacceptable at any time in the preceding two years. The bill would eliminate current statutes that can be confusing as to whether a student qualifies for the program.

The bill would provide an incentive for schools to improve their accountability ratings by allowing students to become eligible for a transfer if the school was considered academically unacceptable in any of the past two, rather than three, years.

OPPONENTS SAY: CSHB 2113 would further limit public school choice by changing the requirements for the Public Education Grant program so that fewer students would be eligible.

NOTES: The original version of the bill would have allowed a student to qualify for a PEG if the school to which the student was assigned was considered academically unacceptable during the preceding school year.

HB 2113 was withdrawn from the Local, Consent, and Resolutions Calendar and transferred to the Calendars Committee.