

SUBJECT: Creating the Early Childhood Health and Nutrition Interagency Council

COMMITTEE: Agriculture and Livestock — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 8 ayes — Gonzalez Toureilles, Anderson, B. Brown, Crabb, Hardcastle, Kleinschmidt, Rios Ybarra, Swinford

0 nays

1 absent — Heflin

SENATE VOTE: On final passage, March 19 —31-0, on Local and Uncontested Calendar

WITNESSES: For — Rhonda Lane, Texas Action for Healthy Kids and Partnership for a Healthy Texas; (*Registered, but did not testify*, Robert Borowski, Texas Impact; Greg Herzog, Texas Medical Association; Carrie Kroll, Texas Pediatric Society; Lee Lane, Texas Association of Local Health Officials; Lisa Lewis-Nourzad, Texas PTA; Andrew Rivas, Texas Catholic Conference; Joel Romo, American Heart Association, Partnership for a Healthy Texas; Denise Rose, Texas Hospital Association; Donald Smith, Texas Early Childhood Education; Grant Wallace, American Cancer Society; Katherine Zackel, Texans Care for Children)

Against — None

On — Catherine Wright-Steele, Texas Department of Agriculture

DIGEST: SB 395 would create the Early Childhood Health and Nutrition Interagency Council. The council would review current research to assess the health of children under age 6 in Texas compared with children in other states, the significance of nutrition and physical activity in child development before age 6, and the existence of requirements for nutrition and physical activity in early childhood care settings.

Members. The council would be composed of seven members, representing each of the following:

- the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC);
- the Department of State Health Services (DSHS);
- the DSHS's Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC);
- the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC);
- the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA);
- the Texas Education Agency's (TEA) school health programs; and
- the Department of Family and Protective Services' Child Care Licensing Division.

Council responsibilities. The council would be required to review early childhood nutrition and physical activity programs administered by the agencies represented on the council and identify existing state and federal funding sources for promoting health and nutrition in early childhood care settings.

SB 395 would require the council to consult with stakeholders to identify best practices and barriers to improving nutrition and physical activity in early childhood care settings. TDA could commission a university study on best practices and obstacles to addressing nutrition and physical activity.

Nutrition and Physical Activity Plan. The bill would require the council to develop a six-year early childhood nutrition and physical activity plan designed to:

- increase fruit and vegetable consumption among children under age 6;
- increase daily exercise in early childhood care settings;
- increase awareness among parents about the benefits of breast-feeding, healthy eating, and appropriate physical activity;
- facilitate breast milk consumption in early childhood care settings;
- decrease malnutrition and undernourishment; and
- engage community and state resources and providers in parent education.

TDA would provide necessary staff and resources for the council, and the TDA commissioner would adopt rules for implementation. Members would serve two-year terms, expiring February 1 on odd-numbered years. Members would not be subject to term limits. They would not receive

compensation for serving on the council but would be reimbursed for expenses.

Meetings. The bill would allow council meetings to be held by conference call. The council would be required to hold three meeting a year and invite the following stakeholders to at least two of those meetings:

- an individual with expertise in early childhood nutrition and physical activity;
- an individual who worked at a child-care facility;
- an individual who worked at a child-care facility operated in a private home;
- two individuals with medical experience in early childhood health;
- a representative from a non-profit organization that provided family or wellness services; and
- a representative from an agency or group with expertise in community health education and outreach.

Report. The council would be required to submit a biennial report to the Legislature on the actions taken in furthering the plan, areas that needed improvement, and programs and practices that addressed physical activity in early childhood settings. The first report to the Legislature would be due by November 1, 2012. The bill would require the council to hold two or more public hearings and three or more opportunities for public input by August 1, 2010. The council would be subject to Sunset review and would be abolished on September 1, 2019, if not continued by the Legislature.

The 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, 2009.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

SB 365 would help prevent young children from developing diseases that once were limited to older populations. Data compiled from participants in the Texas Woman, Infants and Children (WIC) Supplemental Nutritional Program indicate that since 2007, more than 20 percent of the children in the program between two and five years old were overweight or obese. Additionally, one in three Texas school aged children are overweight or obese. The interagency council created by the bill would help find ways to address the epidemic of obesity among Texas children.

The bill would help improve children's health at an extremely important developmental stage in their lives. Texas already has a number of programs to address childhood nutrition after children reach kindergarten, but there has not been much focus on nutrition and physical activity in early childhood care settings. The plan developed by the council would focus on physical activity and nutrition in early childhood care settings.

SB 365 would centralize efforts among Texas state agencies to promote childhood nutrition and physical activity. By bringing together representatives from all state agencies that operate programs to combat childhood obesity, the bill would prevent these agencies from duplicating work. It also would provide a forum in which stakeholders from varied backgrounds could learn from each other and determine the best ways to combat childhood obesity in Texas.

OPPONENTS
SAY:

No apparent opposition.