

SUBJECT: Establishing high school dropout recovery programs

COMMITTEE: Higher Education — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 6 ayes — Branch, Alonzo, Brown, D. Howard, Lewis, Patrick

0 nays

3 absent — Castro, Bonnen, Johnson

SENATE VOTE: On final passage, May 11 — 31-0

WITNESSES: For — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Rey Garcia, Texas Association of Community Colleges; Nicolas Gonzalez, Juan Mejia, South Texas College; Susan Milam, National Association of Social Workers, Texas Chapter; Marsha Solana, Catholic Bishops of Texas)

Against — None

On — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Lori Taylor)

DIGEST: SB 975 would authorize certain public junior colleges, beginning September 1, 2012, to enter into an articulation agreement with one or more school districts located in the junior college district to provide a dropout recovery program on the junior college campus for students to successfully complete and receive a high school diploma.

To be eligible to enroll in the program, a student would have to be under the age of 26 and need to complete no more than three course credits to complete the curriculum requirements for the minimum, recommended, or advanced high school program, as appropriate, for high school graduation. A high school student who had failed to perform satisfactorily on certain end-of-course assessments would also be eligible to enroll in the program.

A public junior college would be required to design a dropout recovery curriculum that included career and technology education courses that lead to industry or career certification.

Research-based strategies that would assist students in becoming able academically to pursue postsecondary education would have to be integrated into the curriculum. The strategies would have to include:

- high-quality, college readiness instruction with strong academic and social supports;
- secondary to postsecondary bridging that built college readiness skills, provided a plan for college completion, and ensured transition; and
- information concerning appropriate supports available in the first year of postsecondary enrollment to ensure postsecondary persistence and success, to the extent funds were available.

The public junior college also would have to offer advanced academic and transition opportunities, including dual credit courses and college preparatory courses, and coordinate with each partnering school district to provide that it retained accountability for student attendance, student completion of high school course requirements, and student performance on assessment instruments necessary for the student to receive a high school diploma.

Students in the program would be included in computing the district's average daily attendance for funding purposes.

A junior college district could receive from each partnering school district for each student from that district enrolled in the program an amount negotiated between the districts. The amount could not exceed the total average per student funding amount in that district during the preceding school year for maintenance and operations, including state and local funding, but excluding money from the Available School Fund.

A junior college would be eligible to receive dropout prevention and intervention program funds. A junior college also could receive gifts, grants, and donations.

The bill would apply only to a public junior college located in a county of 750,000 or more with less than 65 percent of the population 25 years and older having graduated from high school. The bill still would apply to a junior college district if, after the junior college entered into a partnership and began providing the dropout recovery program, the county's demographics changed and the county no longer met the requirements.

The bill would apply only to a school district with a dropout rate higher than 15 percent, but if after the district entered into a partnership, the district's dropout rate changed and the district no longer met the requirements, the provisions of the bill still would apply. These provisions would expire September 1, 2013.

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, 2011.

NOTES:

According to the bill's fiscal note, Hidalgo County would be the only county to meet the eligibility requirements for population size and educational attainment specified in the bill. The cost to the Foundation School Program would be less than \$150,000 in fiscal 2013. Once the program was open to public junior colleges and school districts statewide in 2014, the program's estimated cost would be \$27.8 million in fiscal 2014, \$28.3 million in fiscal 2015, and \$28.8 million in fiscal 2016.