

SUBJECT: Funding child care expenses through compensatory education funds

COMMITTEE: Public Education — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 11 ayes — Huberty, Bernal, Allen, Bohac, Deshotel, Dutton, Gooden,
K. King, Koop, Meyer, VanDeaver

0 nays

WITNESSES: For — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Michelle Smith, Arlington ISD; Monty Exter, Association of Texas Professional Educators; Chandra Villanueva, Center for Public Policy Priorities; Traci Berry, Goodwill Central Texas; Dana Harris, Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce; Leah Gonzalez, Healthy Futures of Texas; Chris Frandsen, League of Women Voters; Nakia Winfield, National Association of Social Workers-Texas; Kathleen Zimmerman, NYOS Charter School; Seth Rau, San Antonio ISD; Katie Mitten, Texans Care for Children; Dwight Harris, Texas American Federation of Teachers; Miranda Goodsheller, Texas Association of Business; Barry Haenisch, Texas Association of Community Schools; Lori Henning, Texas Association of Goodwills; Bill Grusendorf, Texas Association of Rural Schools; Amy Beneski, Texas Association of School Administrators; Grover Campbell and Jayme Mathias, Texas Association of School Boards; Gwen Daverth, Texas Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy; Jennifer Allmon, Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops; David Dunn, Texas Charter Schools Association; Mark Terry, Texas Elementary Principals and Supervisors Association; Jaime Puente, Texas Graduate Student Diversity; Ellen Arnold, Texas PTA; Colby Nichols, Texas Rural Education Association; Rebecca Flores, Texas School Alliance; Christy Rome, Texas School Coalition; Portia Bosse, Texas State Teachers Association; Aidan Utzman, United Way of Texas; and 15 individuals)

Against — None

On — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Leonardo Lopez, Texas Education Agency)

BACKGROUND: Education Code, sec. 42.152 establishes that compensatory education allotment funds can be used to assist students who are educationally disadvantaged as measured by enrollment in the federal free or reduced-price lunch program or in a remedial support program because they are pregnant. School districts receive an adjustment to the basic allotment for each student served under compensatory education.

School districts generally must use these funds for instructional purposes including improving student performance on state assessments and enhancing high school completion rates for students who are at risk of dropping out of school.

DIGEST: HB 223 would allow school districts to use compensatory education allotment funds to pay for providing child-care services or assisting with child-care expenses for at-risk students who were pregnant or who were parents.

Districts also could use compensatory education funds to pay for costs associated with the following services provided through a life skills program for students who were pregnant or who were parents:

- counseling and self-help programs;
- day care for the students' children on campus or at a nearby facility;
- transportation for students and their children to and from the campus or day care facility;
- instruction in child development, parenting, and home and family living skills; and
- assistance in obtaining government and community services, including certain health programs.

This bill would take effect September 1, 2017.

SUPPORTERS SAY: HB 223 would give school districts more local control of compensatory education dollars, allowing them to better tailor the mix of programs and services provided to at-risk students who were pregnant or were parents.

The bill would not require a district to provide any particular services. School districts simply would have more discretion in how they could use compensatory education funding.

Parenthood is one of the leading reasons teen girls drop out of school. Finding and paying for dependable child care, managing the needs of pregnancy, and lacking access to support services are all major barriers to student parents. The bill would provide much-needed support to these at-risk students allowing them to access child care and other services.

Students who have dropped out of high school are more likely to be unemployed, engage in criminal activity, and be enrolled in Medicaid and other welfare programs. Children born to teens who have dropped out are more likely to drop out themselves, leading to generational poverty and significant economic costs for the state and society in the future. Using compensatory education dollars to support students who were parents or were pregnant would pay great dividends down the road and would be consistent with the purpose of these funds, which is to support students who are educationally disadvantaged and at risk of dropping out.

Many districts would like to offer these services but currently must pay for them out of general revenue funds, which often are already strained. Some districts have struggled to provide child care after the state ceased funding for the Life Skills Program for Student Parents grant program in fiscal 2012-13. Districts currently using general revenue funds for these programs could put those funds toward other purposes.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

Compensatory education funds were designed to provide for accelerated reading instruction, mentoring, and other programs that help improve student performance and should not be diverted for child care expenses. Most districts do not have excess compensatory education funds, and a school that provided child care expenses and other support services might have to cut other programs designed to improve student performance.

School districts that wish to provide child care and associated services already have flexibility to do so through their general revenue funds.

Districts also could help students apply for workforce commission grants or partner with outside sources to continue helping with child care.