

- SUBJECT:** Allowing TJJD to open a charter school in Jefferson County
- COMMITTEE:** Juvenile Justice and Family Issues — favorable, without amendment
- VOTE:** 8 ayes — Dutton, Murr, Calanni, Cyrier, Dean, Lopez, Shine, Talarico
- 0 nays
- 1 absent — Bowers
- WITNESSES:** For — None
- Against — None
- On — Zenobia Joseph; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Elizabeth Kromrei, Department of Family and Protective Services)
- DIGEST:** HB 1930 would allow the Texas Juvenile Justice Board to establish a charter school to educate children who had been found to have engaged in delinquent conduct or conduct indicating a need for supervision.
- The charter school could be established only in a county with a population of between 250,000 and 270,000 that was located less than 100 miles from a Texas Juvenile Justice Department (TJJD) district office (Jefferson County).
- The charter school's goals would include:
- enabling students to achieve high academic standards in secondary education, participate in the workforce, join the military, and enroll in postsecondary education;
  - maintaining safe communities;
  - reducing future adverse involvement in the criminal justice system; and
  - contributing to the prosperity and welfare of Texas.

**Duties and operations.** The charter school would be governed and operated by the Texas Juvenile Justice Board. TJJD could coordinate or partner with the juvenile probation department of the county in which the school was located or with any other public or private entity to establish the charter school or to provide the school's programs or services.

The bill would require the charter school to:

- develop an academic achievement plan for each student that was designed to produce high academic achievement and prepare students for postsecondary education or military careers;
- develop and implement a comprehensive, evidence-based, and individualized therapeutic counseling plan for each student to facilitate academic achievement, mitigate delinquent behavior, and encourage the involvement of students' parents or guardians; and
- provide vocational training programs to enable students to obtain workforce credentials, including certification or licensure.

The school also would be subject to the state's required curriculum, high school graduation requirements, and academic and financial accountability standards. Unless otherwise specifically provided, statutory provisions applying to a charter school or the governing body of a charter school would not apply to the school established under the bill.

**Staff.** The charter school would have to develop or adopt a method to attract and hire certified and highly qualified teachers and verify the criminal history and disciplinary record of applicants and employees, including disciplinary actions related to inappropriate conduct or relationships with students or minors.

The school would be required to employ:

- a principal who had a well-developed background in academic leadership and demonstrated experience in dealing with children in the juvenile justice system;

- a sufficient number of teachers to maintain a maximum of 15 students in each class in the foundation curriculum;
- a sufficient number of social workers to maintain a ratio of not less than one social worker for every three students; and
- a highly qualified dietician to prepare healthy meal plans for students.

Employees of the charter school would be classified as state employees for the purposes of paying vacation and sick leave to employees who separated from state employment or to the estates of deceased employees. The executive head of the school would determine whether an educational professional employee was a full-time employee for the purposes of the Texas Employees Group Benefits Act.

**Facilities.** The bill would require the charter school to be located in a facility selected by TJJD, in consultation with a qualified architect, that was designed to facilitate academic and behavioral development.

**Funding.** The charter school would be entitled to receive state funding in the same manner as open-enrollment charter schools. Additionally, the charter school could receive appropriated money from TJJD for educational programs, grants from public or private organizations, and federal funds to be used in compliance with applicable federal laws.

**Sunset review.** The charter school established by the bill would be subject to review by the Texas Sunset Advisory Commission and would be reviewed during the period in which TJJD was reviewed.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2019.

**NOTES:**

According to the Legislative Budget Board, the bill would have a negative impact of about \$3.8 million to general revenue related funds through fiscal 2020-21.