

**SUBJECT:** Addressing shortages of bilingual educators in certain districts

**COMMITTEE:** Public Education — committee substitute recommended

**VOTE:** 11 ayes — Huberty, Bernal, Allison, K. Bell, Dutton, M. González, K. King, Meyer, Sanford, Talarico, VanDeaver

1 nay — Allen

1 absent — Ashby

**WITNESSES:** For — (*Registered, but did not testify:* Brenda Koegler, League of Women Voters of Texas; Molly Weiner, Texas Aspires Foundation; Barry Haenisch, Texas Association of Community Schools; Casey McCreary, Texas Association of School Administrators; Grover Campbell, Texas Association of School Boards; Mark Terry, Texas Elementary Principals and Supervisors Association)

Against — (*Registered, but did not testify:* Alejandra Avila, Texas Latino Education Coalition; Ronnie Fenton; Lisa Flores; Bill Kelberlau)

On — Morgan Craven, Intercultural Research Development Association; (*Registered, but did not testify:* Fatima Menendez, MALDEF; Chloe Sikes, TCEP; Eric Marin, David Marx, and Matt Montano, Texas Education Agency; Angela Valenzuela, University of Texas Center for Education Policy; Macario Hernandez)

**BACKGROUND:** Education Code sec. 29.061 requires that teachers assigned to a bilingual education program using certain program models be appropriately certified for bilingual education by the State Board for Educator Certification.

Education Code sec. 42.153 establishes a bilingual education allotment for each student in average daily attendance in a bilingual education or special language program. The allotment is equal to the adjusted basic allotment multiplied by 0.1, and can be used only for certain purposes, including

program and student evaluation, instructional materials and equipment, and salary supplements for teachers.

DIGEST: CSHB 2609 would permit a school district to assign to any bilingual education program a teacher certified for English as a second language for a school year if:

- the commissioner of education had determined that there was a shortage of teachers certified for bilingual education by the State Board for Educator Certification for the school year; and
- a teacher certified for bilingual education was not reasonably available to the district.

CSHB 2609 also would allow a district to use its bilingual education or special language funding allocation to assist a district teacher in obtaining certification for bilingual education or English as a second language.

The bill would apply beginning with the 2019-2020 school year.

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, 2019.

SUPPORTERS SAY: CSHB 2609 would help schools in rural areas that are having difficulty finding certified bilingual teachers to serve students learning English by allowing teachers who are certified for English as a second language (ESL) to teach bilingual program classes. While it is better to have bilingual certified teachers, some rural districts are facing a severe shortage of these teachers while serving a growing numbers of English learners.

By allowing districts to use some of their bilingual allotment to help teachers get certified for bilingual and ESL education, the bill would help districts grow their own bilingual educators. This would be an appropriate use of the allotment as research shows that qualified bilingual teachers are the key component in raising academic achievement for English learners.

OPPONENTS  
SAY:

HB 2609 would reduce the effectiveness of bilingual education programs by allowing teachers certified in ESL to teach bilingual education programs. The most effective programs for English learners involve bilingual teachers, who have a unique skill set beyond what is expected of general education or ESL teachers. Texas should do more to incentivize bilingual education teacher certification rather than waiving the standards.

Texas offers a small bilingual allotment compared to neighboring states and California, and that allotment should be used to help those students achieve academically rather than being diverted for teacher professional development.