

SUBJECT: Allowing coursework as a qualification for certain plumbing licenses

COMMITTEE: Licensing and Administrative Procedures — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 9 ayes — T. King, Goldman, Geren, Guillen, Harless, Hernandez, K. King, Kuempel, Paddie

0 nays

1 absent — Herrero

1 present not voting — S. Thompson

WITNESSES: For — Alicia Dover, Plumbing-Heating-Cooling Contractors of Texas; Matthew Winn, Winn's Continuing Education; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Jon Fisher, Associated Builders and Contractors of Texas; Daniel Womack, Dow; Traci Berry, Goodwill Central Texas; Lori Henning, Texas Association of Goodwills; Mike Meroney, Texas Association of Manufacturers; Thomas Rice)

Against — Stanley Biers, Texas Plumbing, AC, Mechanical Association; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Rene Lara, Texas AFL-CIO; Stephen Cox, Associated Plumbing-Heating-Cooling Contractors of Texas; Russell Shelton; Edward Sills)

BACKGROUND: Occupations Code sec. 1301.002(10) defines a "tradesman plumber-limited license holder" as a person who has completed 4,000 hours as a plumber's apprentice, has passed a required examination, constructs and installs plumbing for one- or two-family dwellings under the supervision of a responsible master plumber, and has fulfilled other requirements of the Texas State Board of Plumbing Examiners (TSBPE).

DIGEST: CSHB 4296 would amend the definition of a tradesman plumber-limited license holder to allow for a public high school student to have successfully completed a coherent sequence of courses in the plumbing

trade offered through a career and technology education program in lieu of completing 4,000 hours of apprenticeship.

The Texas State Board of Plumbing Examiners (TSBPE) would develop the courses, and the State Board of Education would approve them. The courses would have to include an appropriate number of hours of classroom instruction and a practical component. TSBPE could credit on-the-job training toward meeting the requirements under the practical component.

Only master plumbers, journeyman plumbers or plumbing inspectors could be instructors for such courses. Instructors could provide instruction in a full- or part-time capacity as an employee, contractor, or volunteer of a high school. Instructors could renew their plumbing licenses without paying a fee and by completing six hours of continuing professional education every three years, rather than every year.

The bill would establish that a student of any age enrolled in a high school would be eligible to take the courses without registering as a plumber's apprentice, paying any registration fee, or having to comply with any other Occupations Code regulations concerning plumbers. A student who completed the courses and passed a license examination would be required to be granted a license by TSBPE.

TSBPE could adopt rules necessary to implement this process, including rules to verify a student's successful completion of the sequence of courses and rules to verify whether a person qualified for an exemption from the renewal fee or professional education requirements. These rules would be required to be adopted as soon as practicable after the effective date of the bill.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2019.

SUPPORTERS
SAY:

CSHB 4296 would prompt more young people to enter the plumbing profession, preparing them for a successful career in a field with good prospects for stability and earnings. It also would help reverse a trend in

which career and technical education has been disappearing from high schools. The bill would address a shortage of skilled workers in the plumbing industry by reducing bureaucratic hurdles and financial burdens that might otherwise impede high school students from becoming tradesman plumbers.

The Texas State Board of Plumbing Examiners, which would develop the courses under the bill, is capable of striking the right balance between work hours and classroom training for high school students.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

CSHB 4296 could result in plumbers who were ill-prepared for the demands of their jobs. The current system requires 4,000 work hours to qualify for the tradesman plumber-limited license, but students who completed courses under the bill would not necessarily have to have any work experience in order to be licensed. While the bill's goal is a admirable one, the requirements of this program would be insufficient to ensure an adequate level of competence and safety.