

SUBJECT: Continuing enrollment for certain children eligible for free prekindergarten

COMMITTEE: Public Education — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 13 ayes — Huberty, Bernal, Allen, Allison, Ashby, K. Bell, Dutton, M. González, K. King, Meyer, Sanford, Talarico, VanDeaver

0 nays

SENATE VOTE: On final passage, April 17 — 30-1 (Schwertner), on Local and Uncontested Calendar

WITNESSES: *On House companion bill, HB 2030:*

For — Ami Cortes, Austin ISD; Marie Appel, Commit Partnership; Derek Little, Dallas ISD (*Registered, but did not testify*: Andrea Chevalier, Association of Texas Professional Educators; Chandra Villanueva, Center for Public Policy Priorities; Jason Sabo, Children at Risk; Melanie Rubin, Dallas Early Education Alliance; Priscilla Camacho, Dallas Regional Chamber; Libby McCabe, Early Matters Dallas; Veronica Garcia, Good Reason Houston; Traci Berry, Goodwill Central Texas; Ashlea Turner, Houston ISD; Tim Miller, Raise Your Hand Texas; Seth Rau, San Antonio ISD; David Feigen, Texans Care for Children; Dwight Harris, Texas American Federation of Teachers; Kimberly Kofron, Texas Association for the Education of Young Children; Casey McCreary, Texas Association of School Administrators; Grover Campbell, Texas Association of School Boards; Lonnie Hollingsworth, Texas Classroom Teachers Association; Mark Terry, Texas Elementary Principals and Supervisors Association; Chris Frandsen, Texas League of Women Voters; Kyle Ward, Texas PTA; Dee Carney, Texas School Alliance; Christy Rome, Texas School Coalition; Nataly Saucedo, United Ways of Texas)

Against — None

On — Jacquie Porter, Texas Education Agency

BACKGROUND: Education Code sec. 29.153(b) makes eligible for enrollment in a free prekindergarten class a child who is at least three years of age and:

- is unable to speak and comprehend English;
- is educationally disadvantaged;
- is homeless, as defined by federal law;
- is the child of an active duty member of the armed forces ordered to serve on active duty;
- is the child of a member of the armed forces who was injured or killed while serving on duty;
- is or ever had been in the conservatorship of the Department of Family and Protective Services; or
- is the child of a peace officer, firefighter, or emergency medical first responder eligible for the Star of Texas Award.

Some parties have noted that the process for demonstrating a child's eligibility for free prekindergarten classes following the year the child enrolled at age three can be challenging and confusing for many parents and can result in children not being reenrolled.

DIGEST: SB 1679 would authorize children at the age of three who were eligible for enrollment in a free prekindergarten class to remain eligible for enrollment for the following school year.

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

The 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.