HOUSE
RESEARCH
ORGANIZATION bill digest   5/21/2019

SB 2180 (2nd reading)
Nelson, et al.
(Ashby)

SUBJECT: Increasing computer science instruction, participation in public schools

COMMITTEE: Public Education — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 11 ayes — Huberty, Bernal, Allen, Allison, Ashby, K. Bell, Dutton, M. González, Meyer, Talarico, VanDeaver

              0 nays

              2 absent — K. King, Sanford

SENATE VOTE: On final passage, April 17 — 31-0

WITNESSES: For — Carol Fletcher, Pflugerville ISD; Tania Curry, Project Lead The Way; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Caroline Joiner, Code.org; Priscilla Camacho, Dallas Regional Chamber; David Edmonson, TechNet; Mike Meroney, Texas Association of Manufacturers; Jennifer Bergland, Texas Computer Education Association; Drew Scheberle, The Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce)

              Against — None

              On — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Eric Marin and Monica Martinez, Texas Education Agency)

BACKGROUND: Education Code sec. 28.002 provides curriculum requirements for public school students in kindergarten through grade 12, including a foundational curriculum of math, science, English, and social studies and an enrichment curriculum that includes, among other subject areas, career and technology education and technology applications.

              Concerns have been raised that public school students in Texas are not being adequately prepared for jobs in computer science and other jobs that require coding skills.

DIGEST: SB 2180 would require the State Board of Education (SBOE) to adopt

essential knowledge and skills (TEKS) for the technology applications curriculum for kindergarten through grade 8 that included coding, computer programming, computational thinking, and cybersecurity.

The board would have to review and revise the TEKS every five years to ensure that the technology applications curriculum was relevant to student education and aligned with current or emerging professions. The SBOE would have to review the curriculum by December 31, 2022.

The bill would require the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to establish the computer science strategic advisory committee to provide recommendations for increasing computer science instruction and participation in public schools.

The committee would be composed of at least 11 members, including:

- two members each appointed by the governor, the lieutenant governor, and the House speaker;
- one member each appointed by the chair of the legislative committees with primary jurisdiction over primary and secondary education and the chairs of the legislative committees with primary jurisdiction over higher education; and
- one member appointed by the SBOE chair.

The governor, lieutenant governor, and House speaker would have to coordinate in appointing members to ensure that their appointees collectively included three public school educators who were certified in computer science, one parent of a public school student, one person employed in the technology industry, and one faculty member of an institution of higher education. The governor would designate a presiding officer who would serve at the pleasure of the governor.

Funding for the advisory committee's expenses would be provided by an appropriation to TEA for that purpose.

By September 1, 2020, the committee would have to submit to the

governor and the Legislature a report that included recommendations to change state law, including funding proposals and timelines, intended to increase the number of certified computer science teachers, public high schools offering computer science courses, and high school students enrolled in such courses. The report also would have to provide recommendations to encourage the enrollment of diverse student populations in computer science courses and expand learning opportunities in public schools.

The committee and related provisions would expire January 1, 2021.

TEA would be required to implement a provision of the bill only if appropriated money specifically for that purpose. Otherwise, TEA could, but would not be required, to implement the bill using other funds.

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.

NOTES: According to the Legislative Budget Board, SB 2180 would have a negative impact to general revenue related funds of $522,101 through fiscal 2021.