

SUBJECT: Providing preparation for teaching bilingual education, ESL, or Spanish

COMMITTEE: Public Education — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 7 ayes — Dutton, Lozano, Allen, Allison, Bernal, Meza, Talarico

5 nays — K. Bell, Buckley, Huberty, K. King, VanDeaver

1 absent — M. González

WITNESSES: For — Chloe Latham Sikes, Intercultural Development Research Association; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Andrea Chevalier, Association of Texas Professional Educators; Julia Grizzard, Bexar County Education Coalition; Jennifer Toon, Coalition of Texans with Disabilities; Chandra Villanueva, Every Texan; Vanessa Beltran, Girls Empowerment Network; Eddie Conger, ILTexas Public Charter Schools; Valerie DeBill, League of Women Voters of Texas; Fatima Menendez, Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund; Naomi Miller, Northside ISD; Hillary Lilly, San Antonio ISD; Jesus H. Chavez, South Texas Association of Schools; Grover Campbell, TASB; David Feigen, Texans Care for Children; Dena Donaldson, Texas American Federation of Teachers; Barry Haenisch, Texas Association of Community Schools; Amy Beneski, Texas Association of School Administrators; Mark Terry, Texas Elementary Principals and Supervisors Association; Carrie Griffith, Texas State Teachers Association; Ana Ramon, Texas Legislative Education Equity Coalition; Ashley Harris, United Ways of Texas; Ramiro Canales; Susana Carranza; Thomas Parkinson; Heather Sheffield)

Against — None

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

BACKGROUND: Interested parties have noted that while many Texas students are designated as English learners, there is a shortage of qualified bilingual educators across the state, especially in rural areas. There have been calls

to identify promising high school students and incentivize them to become bilingual teachers to address this shortage.

DIGEST:

HB 1744 would create a program to provide financial incentives for individuals seeking certification and employment to teach bilingual education, English as a second language (ESL), or Spanish. The bill also would require the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to develop a program of study for these fields.

Financial incentive program. HB 1744 would require the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) to establish a program to provide financial incentives such as tuition assistance or student loan repayment to:

- assist persons in obtaining certification to teach bilingual education, ESL, or Spanish in a public elementary or secondary school in the state; and
- facilitate the employment of those persons by a school in this state that had a shortage of teachers certified to teach in those fields.

The financial incentives could be awarded to each participant in the program to assist with the cost of payment of mandatory tuition and fees for courses required to obtain certification to teach in the specified fields. In administering the program, THECB would have to give priority to awarding financial incentives to eligible persons who demonstrated the greatest financial need.

To be eligible to receive financial incentives under the bill, a person would have to:

- apply to the THECB as prescribed by board rule;
- be admitted into an educator preparation program at a higher education institution that prepared students for certification to teach bilingual education, ESL, or Spanish;
- enter into an agreement with the board; and
- satisfy any other criteria jointly prescribed by the THECB and the

State Board for Educator Certification.

To qualify for financial incentives under the program, a person would have to enter into a written agreement with THECB that would require the person to:

- obtain certification to teach bilingual education, ESL, or Spanish in a public elementary or secondary school in this state within the period specified by the board;
- accept an offer of full-time employment to teach bilingual education, ESL, or Spanish in a public elementary or secondary school in the state that had a shortage of teachers certified to teach in one or more of those fields during the first school year that began after the date the person became certified; and
- teach in one or more of those fields at that school for at least two school years.

A program participant who failed to meet the qualifying requirements of the bill would have to reimburse THECB for any assistance received. THECB would be required to establish exceptions to the reimbursement requirement for participants who were unable to meet the qualifying requirements as a result of unusual hardship.

In addition to money appropriated by the Legislature, THECB could solicit and accept gifts, grants, and donations for the purposes of the bill. The board would be required to adopt rules necessary for the administration of the program, including a rule that set the maximum amount of financial assistance that a person could receive in one year. Rules would have to be adopted as soon as practicable after the bill had taken effect.

Program of study. HB 1744 would require TEA to develop a program of study for use in career and technology education programs that would prepare and assist students in pursuing a career teaching bilingual education, ESL, or Spanish.

The agency would have to post on its website information regarding the program of study and the financial incentive program administered by the THECB as established under the bill. TEA would have to develop the program of study beginning no later than the 2022-2023 school year.

Required information for high school students. The bill would require the information provided annually to high school students by a school counselor under current law to include information on the availability of programs that prepared students for teaching bilingual education, ESL, and Spanish, including the TEA program of study and the THECB financial incentive program. This requirement would apply beginning with the 2022-2023 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, 2021.

NOTES:

According to the Legislative Budget Board, HB 1744 would have a negative impact to general revenue of about \$6.9 million through the biennium ending August 31, 2023. The THECB indicates that the costs related to providing financial incentives under the bill's provisions cannot be estimated because the number of individuals who would qualify for participation and fulfill the requirements of the program is unknown.