

**SUBJECT:** Authorizing schools to operate certain local remote learning programs

**COMMITTEE:** Youth Health & Safety, Select — favorable, without amendment

**VOTE:** 6 ayes — S. Thompson, Hull, Allison, Capriglione, A. Johnson, T. King  
0 nays  
3 absent — Dutton, Landgraf, Lozano

**WITNESSES:** For — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Taylor Sims, Graduation Solutions; Dr. Roosevelt Nivens, Lamar CISD; Melissia Smith, LCISD; Leela Rice, Texas Council of Community Centers; Suzi Kennon, Texas PTA)  
  
Against — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Tricia Cave, Association of Texas Professional Educators; Paige Williams, Texas Classroom Teachers Association)  
  
On — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Justin Porter, Marian Schutte, John Scott, Texas Education Agency)

**BACKGROUND:** Education Code ch. 30A establishes the state virtual school network to provide high-quality electronic course education for Texas students.  
  
Some have suggested that schools could better serve the needs of students at risk of dropping out of school by offering additional remote learning options to those students.

**DIGEST:** HB 1678 would authorize a school district or charter school to operate a local remote learning program offering virtual courses outside the state virtual school network to eligible students at risk of dropping out of school. A virtual course offered under the local remote learning program would have to be provided through asynchronous instruction and provide for at least the same number of instructional hours as required for a course offered in a program that met the minimum number of minutes of school operation required by statute.

Provisions regarding the state virtual school network would not apply to a virtual course offered under a local remote learning program.

A student would be eligible to enroll in a local remote learning program virtual course if the student was enrolled at the high school level and at risk of dropping out and if the student's district or charter school determined that participation in the program was suitable for the student. The bill would require a district or charter school that operated such a program to develop a process to identify students who were eligible to enroll in virtual courses offered under the program and screen students to ensure that participation was suitable for the student.

A district or charter school could, but would not be required to, provide technological equipment to students who enrolled in a virtual course offered under a local remote learning program. A student enrolled in a virtual course offered under such a program would be counted toward the district's or charter school's average daily attendance in the same manner as other students. The commissioner of education would adopt rules providing for a method of taking attendance, once each school day, for students enrolled in one of these courses.

The bill would not prohibit a student of a district or charter school that offered such a program from enrolling in courses offered through the state virtual school network.

The bill would apply beginning with the 2023-2024 school year and 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, 2023.