

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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DIGEST

Childhood and adolescent obesity has reached epidemic proportions among American youth; the American Obesity Association (AOA) revealed in 2000 that the incidence of obesity in children and adolescents had quadrupled since 1971, with 15.3 percent of children ages 6 to 11 and 15.5 percent of adolescents ages 12 to 19 identified as obese. Even more alarming is the increasing prevalence of overweight among the nation's children and adolescents, which is commonly an indicator of potential health problems as an adult; according to the same study by the AOA, approximately 30.3 percent of children ages 6 to 11 and 30.4 percent of adolescents ages 12 to 19 are overweight, and overweight children aged 10 to 14 with at least one overweight or obese parent were reported to have a 79 percent likelihood of overweight persisting into adulthood. The potential lifelong consequences of this epidemic are evidenced by the fact that overweight and obese children are at higher risk for serious long-term health problems, including Type II diabetes, cardiovascular disease, stroke, hypertension, asthma, orthopedic complications, sleep apnea, gall bladder disease, and certain cancers; the Texas Department of Health reports that 62.4 percent of all deaths in Texas result from four of these chronic diseases--heart disease, cancer, stroke, and diabetes--each of which can be prevented through healthy habits developed in childhood. The school environment plays a critical role in establishing a child's nutritional regimen and meeting a child's dietary needs; indeed, a child who eats a school breakfast and lunch that meet the nutritional standards established by the United States Department of Agriculture for the national school breakfast and national school lunch programs receives 60 percent of the child's average daily nutritional needs. Overweight and obesity are far-reaching problems not unique to any one racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic group; the Texas Legislature has long recognized that the health of the state of Texas depends on the health of its children and this latest crisis merits its utmost attention.

PURPOSE

Provides that the 78th Legislature of the State of Texas hereby request the lieutenant governor and the speaker of the house of representatives to create a joint interim committee to study nutrition in public schools, obesity- and nutrition-related diseases, a universal breakfast and lunch program, and competitive food and vending machine contracts, revenues, and accountability of revenues. Provides that the interim committee be composed of the following members: the commissioner of education, the commissioner of health, the commissioner of agriculture, three members of the senate, appointed by the lieutenant governor, and three members of the house of representatives, appointed by the speaker of the house. Provides that the governor be invited to appoint members to the committee with the request that such appointees include the following: one member who is a physician who provides health services to school-aged children, one member who has expertise in nutrition, one member who is a parent of a school-aged child, and one member who is a superintendent of schools or school principal. Provides that the interim committee hold hearings throughout the state during the interim of the 78th Legislature to determine the nutritional content and quality of foods and beverages served to public school children, including food service meals, a la carte foods, and competitive foods and vending machines; evaluate the short- and long-term financial, psychological, and physiological impact of obesity in public school children; assess the academic, emotional, and health value of a universal breakfast and lunch program by evaluating schoolchildren from school districts that provide everyone a free or reduced-price breakfast and lunch; evaluate school contracts relating to competitive food products and vending machines to determine economic and other impacts of potential conflicts of interest; the length of contracts; advertising and marketing of competitive

food products; revenues realized by schools and school districts arising from the sale of competitive food products; officials in charge of receiving and disbursing revenue and the accounting of that revenue; and losses sustained by each school district's food service program to competitive foods; and consult with the School Health Advisory Council to carry out its duties. Provides that the committee's proceedings and operations be governed by such general rules and policies for joint interim committees as the 78th Legislature may adopt and that such rules and policies supersede the provisions of this resolution to the extent of any conflict. Provides that the interim committee submit a full report, including findings and recommendations to the governor, the lieutenant governor, and the speaker of the house not later than October 1, 2004.