

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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S.B. 1543
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Economic Development
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As Filed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Low levels of literacy present an enormous challenge to Texas' future economic prosperity.

As proposed, S.B. 1543 requires the Texas Workforce Commission to establish the Interagency Literacy Council (council); directs the council to conduct a systematic study of literacy problems across the state; and requires the council to develop a statewide plan to address literacy issues, especially as they relate to workforce and economic development issues. This bill requires the council to report its findings and recommendations to the legislature and the governor on or before November 1st of each even-numbered year.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Texas Workforce Commission in SECTION 1 (Section 312.011, Labor Code) of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Subtitle B, Title 4, Labor Code, by adding Chapter 312, as follows:

CHAPTER 312. INTERAGENCY LITERACY COUNCIL

Sec. 312.001. DEFINITION. Defines "council."

Sec. 312.002. APPLICATION OF SUNSET ACT. Provides that the Interagency Literacy Council (council) is subject to Chapter 325 (Sunset Law), Government Code. Provides that the council, unless continued in existence as provided by that chapter, is abolished and this chapter expires September 1, 2019.

Sec. 312.003. ESTABLISHMENT AND COMPOSITION. (a) Requires the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) to establish the council. Provides that the council is composed of nine members. Sets forth the composition of the council.

(b) Requires the representative appointed under Subsection (a)(1) (relating to a representative of TWC appointed by the executive director of TWC) to serve as the presiding officer of the council.

Sec. 312.004. COMMISSION DUTIES. Requires TWC to provide staff and resources as necessary for the operation of the council.

Sec. 312.005. TERMS; VACANCY. (a) Provides that members of the council serve two-year terms, with the terms expiring February 1 of each odd-numbered year.

(b) Authorizes a member of the council to be reappointed.

(c) Requires that a vacancy on the council be filled for the remainder of the unexpired term in the same manner as provided by Section 312.003(a).

Sec. 312.006. MEETINGS. (a) Requires the council to meet in person at least three times each year and authorizes it to hold meetings by conference call if necessary.

Requires the council to invite stakeholders to participate in at least one council meeting each year and provide an opportunity for submission of oral or written testimony.

(b) Provides that Section 551.125 (Other Governmental Body), Government Code, applies to a meeting held by conference call under this section, except that Section 551.125(b) (relating to authorizing a meeting held by telephone conference call be held under certain conditions), Government Code, does not apply.

Sec. 312.007. COMPENSATION; REIMBURSEMENT. (a) Prohibits a member of the council from receiving compensation for service on the council.

(b) Authorizes a public member to be reimbursed for the member's actual and necessary expenses for meals, lodging, transportation, and incidental expenses incurred while performing council business, subject to any applicable limitation on reimbursement prescribed by the General Appropriations Act.

Sec. 312.008. COUNCIL POWERS AND DUTIES. Requires the council to study current research to assess the adult literacy needs in this state, including literacy needs relating to business and finance, workforce and technology, civics, and health and wellness; consult with key stakeholders to identify barriers to improving literacy and evidence-based best practices for improving literacy; review the status of the programs and services administered by each agency or entity represented on the council that promote literacy in an effort to coordinate efforts, align services, reduce redundancies, implement best practices, integrate support services, and improve accountability; build existing funding streams and identify additional state and federal funding sources available for the promotion of literacy in this state; and raise literacy awareness and engage community leaders in creative solution building for improving literacy in this state.

Sec. 312.009. STATEWIDE LITERACY PLAN; REPORT. (a) Requires the council to develop a comprehensive statewide action plan for the improvement of literacy in this state, including a recommended timeline for implementation.

(b) Requires the council to submit to both houses of the legislature and the governor on or before November 1 of each even-numbered year a written report on the development of the council's statewide action plan, the actions taken in furtherance of the plan, the areas that need improvement in implementing the plan, any change to the plan, and the programs and services that address literacy needs in this state.

Sec. 312.010. GIFTS, GRANTS, AND DONATIONS. Authorizes TWC to accept for the council a gift, grant, or donation from any source to carry out the purposes of this chapter.

Sec. 312.011. RULES. Authorizes TWC to adopt rules necessary to implement this chapter.

SECTION 2. (a) Requires the council to submit the initial report required under Section 312.009(b), Labor Code, as added by this Act, not later than November 1, 2012.

(b) Requires the designated appointing officials, as soon as practicable after the effective date of this Act, to appoint the members to the council established under Chapter 312, Labor Code, as added by this Act.

SECTION 3. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2009.