

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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C.S.H.B. 2937
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Education
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Committee Report (Substituted)

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Students across the state can take advantage of opportunities to gain credit toward industry certifications or post-secondary degrees through dual-credit programs they can enroll in while still in high school. These programs are beneficial to students, who save money and time on their post-secondary education, as well as to businesses, many of whom promote such programs to improve the quality of their future workforce. While many dual-credit offerings are useful for students who intend to enter the medical field, there is not currently an opportunity for hospitals to work directly with students who wish to obtain industry certifications to become sonography, radiology, or patient care technicians.

C.S.H.B. 2937 helps hospitals fill these workforce needs by directing the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to develop a pilot program that allows school districts to partner with hospitals to offer dual-credit programs. These courses will help students work towards receiving Texas Workforce Commission-approved industry certifications in these high-need medical fields. By allowing students to get a head start toward medical industry certifications, C.S.H.B. 2937 will contribute to the effort to fulfill our state's growing healthcare workforce needs.

C.S.H.B. 2937 amends current law relating to the establishment of a pilot program under which a licensed hospital may offer dual credit courses to public high school students.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in SECTION 1 (Section 61.0764, Education Code) of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Subchapter C, Chapter 61, Education Code, by adding Section 61.0764, as follows:

Sec. 61.0764. MEDICAL DUAL CREDIT PILOT PROGRAM. (a) Requires the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) to develop and implement a pilot program under which a licensed hospital may offer dual credit courses to high school students enrolled in a school district in partnership with the district.

(b) Requires THECB to select up to three licensed hospitals to participate in the pilot program. Requires that each hospital selected be accredited by The Joint Commission and have been issued certain certificates and be accredited to offer a degree program by a recognized accrediting agency.

(c) Provides that a licensed hospital selected under Subsection (b):

(1) is authorized to offer under the pilot program only dual credit courses that are in the curriculum of the hospital's authorized program of instruction or study or accredited degree program, as applicable; and

(2) subject to Subdivision (1) and Subsection (d), is required to determine the content of each dual credit course offered under the pilot program with the goal of ensuring that the course is transferable for course credit applied toward a certificate or degree at an institution of higher education.

(d) Requires that a licensed hospital selected under Subsection (b) design the dual credit courses offered under the pilot program to enable students to earn a variety of certifications, certificates, and degrees, including at least one certification or certificate while the student is in high school. Requires that the available certifications, certificates, and degrees be selected based on the needs of the hospital, the terms of the hospital's agreements with partnering school districts to provide the dual credit courses under the pilot program, and the goal of preparing students for employment in the health care field.

(e) Provides that a student enrolled in a dual credit course offered under the pilot program is entitled to the benefits of the Foundation School Program for the time spent by the student on that course, in accordance with rules adopted by the commissioner of education (commissioner).

(f) Prohibits a student from being charged for tuition, fees, or required textbooks or other instructional materials for a dual credit course offered under the pilot program. Provides that the school district in which the student is enrolled is responsible for the cost of the student's tuition, fees, or required textbooks or other instructional materials for that course to the extent that those amounts are not waived by the licensed hospital offering the course.

(g) Authorizes THECB to adopt rules as necessary to implement this section.

SECTION 2. Provides that Section 61.0764, Education Code, as added by this Act, applies beginning with the 2017-2018 school year.

SECTION 3. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2017.