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HOUSE RESEARCH ORGANIZATION

daily floor report

Tuesday, April 15, 2025
89th Legislature, Number 44
The House convenes at 10 a.m.

Three bills are on the Emergency Calendar, one bill is on the Major State Calendar, and ten bills are on the General State Calendar for second reading consideration today. The table of contents appears on the following page.

Individual bill analyses for postponed items and items on the Supplemental House Calendar can be found on the HRO website and the Dynamic Floor Report: <https://hro-dfr.house.texas.gov>.



Gary VanDeaver
Chairman
89(R) - 44

HOUSE RESEARCH ORGANIZATION

Daily Floor Report

Tuesday, April 15, 2025

89th Legislature, Number 44

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SUBJECT: Amending provisions on career and technical education programs

COMMITTEE: Public Education — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 15 ayes – Buckley, Bernal, Allen, Ashby, Bryant, Cunningham, Dutton, Frank, Hinojosa, Hunter, Kerwin, Leach, Leo Wilson, Schoolcraft, Talarico

0 nays

WITNESSES: For - Mark Bosher, Career and Technical Association of Texas; Priscilla Aquino Garza, Educate Texas; Dagmar Harris, Killeen ISD; Steven Snell, Liberty Hill ISD; Tom Harris, Mayors Council on Education and Workforce Development; Vicki VanNest, Plumbing Heating Cooling Contractors Association; Michael Gonzalez, Rural Schools Innovation Zone; Natalie Williams, T3 Partnership; Mary Lynn Pruneda, Texas 2036; Shannon Noble, Texas Air Conditioning Contractors Association; J.D. Hale, Texas Association of Builders; Mike Meroney, Texas Association of Manufacturers; Kelle Kieschnick, Texas Business Leadership Council (*Registered, but did not testify*: David White, ACT; Ray Pieniazek, Ag Teachers Association of Texas; Steven Albright, AGC of Texas; Amanda List, AList Consulting; Tricia Cave, Association of Texas Professional Educators; Julia Grizzard, Bexar County Education Coalition; Mandi Kimball, Children at Risk; Garry Jones, DFER TX; Jonathan Feinstein, EdTrust in Texas; Rachael McClain, Collegiate Edu-Nation; Alyssa Morton, Empower Schools; Laura Alexander, Greater Houston Partnership; Julia Grizzard, Guadalupe County Education Coalition; Frank Corte, International Leadership of Texas; Jennifer Rodriguez, Lockheed Martin Aeronautics Company; Michael Johnson, NRG Energy; Christopher Lee, North Texas Commission; Julia Grizzard, Permian Basin Education Coalition; Ryan Franklin, Philanthropy Advocates; Myra Leo, Schneider Electric; Megan Mauro, Texas Association of Business; Casey McCreary, Texas Association of School Administrators; Colby Nichols, Texas Association of School Administrators and Texas Association of Community Schools; Kelly Rasti, Texas Association of School Boards; Jennifer Fagan, Texas Construction Association; Drew Fuller, Texas Farm Bureau; Jennifer Easley, Texas PTA; HD Chambers,

Texas School Alliance; Katrina Fraser, The Commit Partnership; Ashley Harris, United Ways of Texas; Yasmin Bhatia, Uplift Education)

Against - None

On - Chris DeWitt, Monica Martinez, Texas Education Agency

DIGEST:

CSHB 120 would establish various provisions on career and technical education, including expanding Financial Aid for Swift Transfer (FAST) program eligibility and increasing certain allotments under the Foundation School Program.

Financial Aid for Swift Transfer (FAST) program. CSHB 120 would allow a student to enroll in a free dual credit course under the FAST program if the student had graduated from high school but was:

- enrolled in a school district or open-enrollment charter school at a campus designated as a P-TECH school under the Pathways in Technology Early College High School (P-TECH) program or in a school district participating in a Rural Pathway Excellence Partnership (R-PEP) program partnership; and
- completing a course of study offered through an articulation agreement or memorandum of understanding with a higher education institution and the P-TECH or R-PEP participating school.

This provision would apply beginning with the 2025-2026 school year.

Foundation School Program. CSHB 120 would establish and amend various provisions under the Foundation School Program (FSP). The bill would amend the student eligibility requirements for the FSP to include a student who had graduated from high school but was enrolled at a P-TECH school or school district in an R-PEP partnership and was completing a P-TECH or R-PEP course of study through an articulation agreement or memorandum of understanding with a higher education institution, regardless of whether the student was enrolled in the district providing the course.

The bill would authorize a school district to use its FSP funding to provide district graduates, within two years of graduating high school, advising support toward the successful completion of a certificate or degree program at a public higher education institution or a postsecondary vocational training program. Such funds also could be used to educate a high school graduate who was enrolled in the district in a dual credit program. The education commissioner would be required to establish the method for determining average enrollment for purposes of funding. Providing such advising and education would be included as authorized expenditures for public schools.

Career and technology education allotment. CSHB 120 would amend provisions on the career and technology education allotment. For each student in average enrollment, rather than daily attendance, a school district would be entitled to \$150, rather than \$50, for each eligible campus in which the student was enrolled.

The bill would include Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC) program courses in the definition of an "approved career and technology education program." For the definition of an "approved program of study," the bill would include a course that provided students with the knowledge and skills to succeed in the military.

New instructional facility allotment. CSHB 120 would include in the definition of a "new instructional facility" a renovated portion of an instructional facility to be used for the first time to provide high-cost and undersubscribed career and technology education programs. The bill would increase the maximum amount that could be appropriated for new instructional facility allotments from \$100 million to \$150 million in a school year. If the total amount of allotments to which districts were entitled exceeded the amount appropriated, the education commissioner, for an eligible renovated portion of an instructional facility, would be authorized to remove a career and technology education program from the list of qualifying programs.

High school advising allotment. CSHB 120 would entitle a school district to \$30,000 for each full-time equivalent advisor or contracted service provider under the high school advising program. The number of advisors

for which a district could receive an allotment could not exceed the quotient of, rounded to the nearest whole number, the number of high school students enrolled in the district and 200. Beginning with the fifth school year for which a school district received an allotment, the education commissioner would be required to reduce the district's allotment by 20 percent for each school year unless the district's performance for the preceding school year:

- exceeded the average of the district's performance for the two years preceding that school year;
- was in the top 25 percent of statewide performance; or
- established that at least 40 percent of the district's educationally disadvantaged annual graduates demonstrated college, career, or military readiness.

State plan for career and technology education. CSHB 120 would require that the state plan for career and technology education include procedures designed to ensure that a course of study offered under a JROTC program was considered a career and technology education program.

Subsidy for certification examination. For a student who completed a certain career and technology program of a school district or was enrolled in a special education program under such a career and technology program, CSHB 120 would allow the student to receive up to two subsidies rather than one subsidy. A teacher would be entitled to a subsidy if the teacher passed a certification exam related to career and technology education rather than cybersecurity. This provision would apply beginning with the 2025-2026 school year.

The bill would entitle a school district to a reimbursement under the FSP for the amount of a subsidy paid by the district for up to two certification exams per student rather than for one exam.

Military pathway grant program. CSHB 120 would require the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to establish a grant program to provide money to school districts to implement a program under which the district:

- established a JROTC program for high school students enrolled in the district;
- annually administered the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery test to each participating student; and
- provided career counseling at least once per year to each student administered the test based on the test results.

Each awarded grant would be \$50,000 and the total amount of grants awarded for a school year could not exceed \$2 million. These provisions would apply beginning with the 2025-2026 school year.

Rural Pathway Excellence Partnership (R-PEP) program. CSHB 120 would allow a school district that had participated in the R-PEP program to continue to participate regardless of the number of the district's students in average daily attendance for the current school year. The bill would remove references to the maximum amount for R-PEP allotments and outcomes. These provisions would apply beginning with the 2025-2026 school year.

The bill would authorize a school district to receive funding for up to 110 percent of the number of students who qualified under the R-PEP program for the school year immediately preceding the school year in which the district's enrollment first reached 1,600 or more.

High school advising program. CSHB 120 would require TEA to establish a high school advising program by which participating school districts and charter schools provided college or career advising supports to students, either by hiring employees or contracting with service providers. A participating district or charter school would have to have at least one partnership agreement with:

- if the district or charter school provided college advisors, a public higher education institution to support students' successful transition to college; and
- if the district or charter school provided career advisors, a vocational program at a public higher education institution, an employer, or a local workforce board.

An advisor would be required to be trained in practices relating to college advising to serve as a college advisor and practices relating to career advising to serve as a career advisor. A full-time equivalent advisor could not have a caseload of more than 200 high school students and would be required to prioritize eleventh and twelfth graders.

In adopting rules as necessary to implement these provisions, the education commissioner would be required to consult with the Texas Workforce Commission and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

These provisions would apply beginning with the 2025-2026 school year.

College preparation and career readiness assessments. CSHB 120 would amend provisions on college preparation assessments to include career readiness assessments. The bill would allow eleventh and twelfth graders in their spring semesters to take once, at state cost, a nationally recognized career readiness assessment instrument that measured foundational workforce skills.

The bill also would amend the title of the “college preparation assessment reimbursement” under the FSP to be the “college preparation and career readiness assessment reimbursement.”

Repeals. CSHB 120 would repeal certain Education Code provisions on the R-PEP program and the R-PEP allotment and outcomes bonus, including provisions:

- requiring the education commissioner, in authorizing partnerships to participate in the program, to give priority to partnerships in which the districts contract with a coordinating entity based on a certain amount of experience managing college and career pathways under a performance contract; and
- limiting the total amount of state funding for R-PEP allotments and outcomes bonuses up to \$5 million per year.

The bill would take immediate effect, except for provisions on the FSP, if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house. Otherwise, it would take effect September 1, 2025. Provisions on the FSP would take effect September 1, 2025.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

CSHB 120 would comprehensively enhance and modernize Texas students' access to career and technology education opportunities in addition to educational advising in high schools. The bill also would help expand the state's future workforce in areas where there are significant skills gaps by providing funding and partnership opportunities for industry to support education. There is a shortage of workers in many job sectors in the state, such as plumbing, heating, cooling and air conditioning, and others like aviation maintenance. The increased funding provided under the bill for career and technology education programs would help prepare students to succeed and attain credentials in high-demand areas and support those who would prefer to join the workforce out of high school. Additionally, by including JROTC programs in the list of career and technical education programs, the bill would support more students entering military careers.

The removal of the \$5 million cap on R-PEP funding and other revisions to the R-PEP program would expand access to the program in more rural school districts, which could help students in rural parts of the state attain college and career pathways. By fostering closer relationships between the business and education sectors in the high school advising program, the bill would provide students with greater access to both college and career advising services that align with the student's post-secondary goals. High school college counselors are already specialized in educational advising and are often overwhelmed with advising responsibilities. By providing a stipend for districts to hire business employers, workforce boards, and vocational programs to aid in providing technical career advising, the bill would help students receive guidance from employers and industry professionals who are better placed to provide career advising.

**CRITICS
SAY:**

While CSHB 120 would make many improvements to career and technical education in the state, it could do more to help Texas students. The bill should integrate college and career advising rather than differentiate between college and career advisors to provide more holistic

guidance for students. Additionally, the bill should include support for specific, future-oriented technical areas of study, such as artificial intelligence and drone technology education for students.

NOTES: According to the Legislative Budget Board, HB 120 would have a negative impact of about \$571.9 million in general revenue related funds through fiscal 2026-27.

- SUBJECT:** Establishing the Applied Sciences Pathway program
- COMMITTEE:** Public Education — committee substitute recommended
- VOTE:** 14 ayes – Buckley, Bernal, Allen, Ashby, Bryant, Cunningham, Frank, Hinojosa, Hunter, Kerwin, Leach, Leo Wilson, Schoolcraft, Talarico
- 1 nay – Dutton
- WITNESSES:** For – Mark Boshier, Career and Technical Association of Texas; J.D. Hale, Texas Association of Builders; Mike Meroney, Texas Association of Manufacturers (TAM) (*Registered, but did not testify*: Ray Pieniazek, Ag Teachers Association of Texas; Steven Albright, AGC of Texas; Mark Borskey, Association of Equipment Manufacturers; Jay Barksdale, Greater Irving - Las Colinas Chamber of Commerce; Jim Short, Houston Real Estate Council; Jennifer Rodriguez, Lockheed Martin Aeronautics Company; Christopher Lee, North Texas Commission; Michael Johnson, NRG Energy; Jay Barksdale, Plano Chamber of Commerce; Vicki VanNest, Plumbing Heating Cooling Contractors Association; Michael Johnson, Texans for Reasonable Solutions; Casey McCreary, Texas Association of School Administrators; Colby Nichols, Texas Association of School Administrators, Texas Association of Community Schools; Rick Lord, Texas Building & Construction Trades; Jennifer Fagan, Texas Construction Association; Drew Fuller, Texas Farm Bureau; Anita Scott, Texas Home School Coalition; Shannon Noble, Texas Industrial Vocational Association; Jennifer Easley, Texas PTA; HD Chambers, Texas School Alliance)
- Against – None
- On – Mary Lynn Pruneda, Texas 2036 (*Registered, but did not testify*: Monica Martinez, Texas Education Agency)
- DIGEST:** CSHB 20 would require the Texas Education Agency (TEA) commissioner to establish and administer the Applied Sciences Pathway program to provide opportunities for students to concurrently earn high school diplomas and certificates from institutions of higher education. The

commissioner would be required to approve participation in program partnerships between school districts or open-enrollment charter schools and institutions of higher education.

Courses would have to be provided in a non-duplicative sequence of progressive achievement leading to a high school diploma as well as completion of a certificate program that has a successful job placement rate in high-wage, high-growth jobs within certain technical industries established by the bill. Beginning with the 2027-2028 school year, the commissioner would be authorized to revise the approved industries once every five years to reflect labor market trends.

A partnership in the program would be required to enable the school district or charter school to provide at least one of the courses included in the program with an institute of higher education, enabling a participating student in grades 11 or 12 to concurrently:

- satisfy high school graduation requirements and receive a high school diploma; and
- enroll in a certified program at the partnering institution of higher learning and earn either a level one or level two certificate, as defined by the commissioner, or another certificate approved by rule.

A partnership also would have to require the partnering school district to permit all students in grades 11 or 12 to enroll in the approved courses. Time that a student spent participating in the program would be counted as part of the minimum number of instructional hours needed for a student to be considered a full-time student in average daily attendance.

The commissioner could approve the substitution of a credit required for high school graduation with a credit in career and technology education (CTE) that substantially covered the aspects of the course substituted. An authorized CTE course substitute could not count for more than one credit toward the student's high school graduation requirements or as a credit for more than one subject area.

A partnership under the program would have to be governed by an articulation agreement between the partnering school district or open enrollment charter school and the institute of higher education and meet any other requirements established by the commissioner. The commissioner would be required to adopt rules necessary to administer the program.

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, 2025 and apply beginning with the 2025-2026 school year.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

By creating the Applied Sciences Pathway program, CSHB 20 would reflect current labor market trends and establish a meaningful career pathway to high-demand jobs. Currently, the available skilled workforce is not meeting market demands, creating various labor shortages in Texas. The bill would address this issue by facilitating dual-credit options for students to obtain technical certifications along with a high school diploma, helping to ensure that students were better prepared to enter the workforce after graduation. By making the program a dual-course credit partnership, the bill would help students pursue a cost-free, career-aligned education in industries vital to the Texas economy without having to pursue a college degree.

Career and technology education CTE courses authorized for a course credit substitution through the program would be required by the bill to substantially cover the substituted course materials, ensuring that students were not deprived of any critical knowledge through their coursework.

**CRITICS
SAY:**

CSHB 20 would not include traditional educational partners, such as trade schools or apprenticeships, that already assist with the transition into vocational jobs.

The bill should only allow CTE credits to be substituted for extracurricular classes. Allowing students to substitute core credits required for graduation with CTE credits earned through the program could deprive students of critical learning experiences. The bill also should create clearer guidelines to ensure postsecondary course options

were aligned with Texas academic requirements. Some schools have struggled to find courses in CTE programs that adequately correspond with Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) standards, preventing students from earning dual credits.

Additionally, the bill would not provide resources for transportation from the partnering high schools and colleges, which could place an additional burden on students.

SUBJECT: Establishing the Texas Cyber Command

COMMITTEE: Delivery of Government Efficiency — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 12 ayes – Capriglione, Bhojani, Alders, Bowers, Cain, Cook, Curry, L. Garcia, Olcott, Rodríguez Ramos, Tinderholt, Troxclair

0 nays

1 absent — Campos

WITNESSES: For - Tom Guarente, Armis; Marc Whyte, City of San Antonio; Joe Sanchez, CyberTexas Foundation; Jeff Webster, Greater San Antonio Chamber of Commerce; Gavin Wince, QUX Technologies Inc; Rahul Sreenivasan, Texas 2036; Megan Mauro, Texas Association of Business; David Dunmoyer, Texas Public Policy Foundation; Joel Bagnal; David Webb (*Registered, but did not testify*: Priscilla Camacho, Alamo Colleges; Marc Rodriguez, Brooks, GreaterSA:TX; Nadia Islam, City of San Antonio; Rebekah Chenelle, Dallas Regional Chamber; Matt Creel, Opportunity Austin; Juan Antonio Flores, Port San Antonio, San Antonio Hispanic Chamber of Commerce; Brian Luffy, Shane Bartholomew, Silotech Group, Inc.; Sarah Matz, Socure; Jessica Browning, State Armor; Renzo Soto, TechNet; Kelle Kieschnick, Texas Business Leadership Council; Dustin Cox, Texas Defense Innovation Forum; Andrew Smith, University Health)

Against - None

On - Taylor Eighmy, State Agency (*Registered, but did not testify*: Amanda Crawford, Tony Sauerhoff, Department of Information Resources)

DIGEST: CSHB 150 would establish the Texas Cyber Command (TCC) as a component of the University of Texas System and administratively attached to the University of Texas at San Antonio to prevent and respond to cybersecurity incidents that affect governmental entities and critical

infrastructure in the state. The bill would define critical infrastructure as infrastructure vital to the security, governance, public health and safety, economy, or moral of the state or nation, and specify various facilities and systems included in the definition. The bill also would define a covered entity as a private entity operating critical infrastructure or a local government that TCC contracted with to provide cybersecurity services.

TCC would be responsible for cybersecurity for the state, and would be managed by a chief appointed by the governor and confirmed with the advice and consent of the Senate. CSHB 150 would require TCC to:

- promote public awareness of cybersecurity issues;
- develop cybersecurity best practices and minimum standards for governmental entities;
- develop and provide training on cybersecurity measures and awareness;
- administer a cybersecurity threat intelligence center;
- provide support to state agencies and covered entities experiencing a cybersecurity incident and respond to cybersecurity reports;
- administer a digital forensics laboratory;
- administer a statewide portal for enterprise cybersecurity threat, risk, and incident management, and operate a cybersecurity hotline;
- collaborate with law enforcement agencies to provide cybersecurity incident training and support;
- serve as a clearinghouse for information related to all aspects of protecting the cybersecurity of governmental entities;
- collaborate with the Department of Information Resources (DIR) to ensure information resources and related technologies met standards and requirements under the bill;
- offer cybersecurity resources to state agencies and covered entities;
- adopt policies to ensure state agencies implemented sufficient measures to defend information resources, related technologies, and sensitive personal information maintained by the agencies; and
- collaborate with federal agencies with regard to cybersecurity incidents.

The chief could adopt rules necessary to carry out TCC's purposes. TCC would be required to recover the cost of providing direct technical assistance, training, and other services to covered entities when reasonable and practical. The Sunset Act would apply to TCC, and the agency would be abolished in 2031 if not continued by the Legislature.

CSHB 150 would require TCC to develop and annually assess best practices and minimum standards for use by governmental entities to enhance the security of information resources. TCC would be required to establish and periodically assess mandatory cybersecurity training for state agency information resources employees, and would have to consult with the Information Technology Council for Higher Education regarding applying training requirements to employees of higher education institutions.

Cybersecurity threat intelligence center. CSHB 150 would require TCC to establish a cybersecurity threat intelligence center and collaborate with federal cybersecurity intelligence and law enforcement agencies to achieve its purposes. The center, in coordination with the laboratory established by the bill, would have to operate an information sharing and analysis organization and provide strategic guidance to regional security operations centers and the cybersecurity incident response unit required to be established by the bill.

Cybersecurity incident response unit. TCC would be required to establish a dedicated cybersecurity incident response unit to:

- detect and contain cybersecurity incidents in collaboration with the cybersecurity threat intelligence center;
- neutralize threats as necessary and appropriate;
- mitigate breaches of sensitive personal information in collaboration with the digital forensics laboratory;
- loan resources to state agencies and covered entities to promote continuity of operations during system restoration after a cybersecurity incident;
- assist in the restoration of information resources and conduct monitoring after a cybersecurity incident;

- in collaboration with the cybersecurity threat intelligence center and digital forensics laboratory, identify weaknesses, establish risk mitigation options and vulnerability-reduction strategies, and make related recommendations; and
- in collaboration with the center, the laboratory, the Texas Division of Emergency Management, and other agencies, conduct, support, and participate in cyber-related exercises.

Digital forensics laboratory. TCC would be required to establish a digital forensics laboratory to:

- develop procedures to preserve evidence of a cybersecurity incident, document chains of custody, and notify and maintain contact with law enforcement agencies investigating a cybersecurity incident in collaboration with the cybersecurity incident response unit;
- develop and share cyber threat hunting tools and procedures with relevant agencies and entities to assist in identifying indicators of compromised cybersecurity of information systems;
- conduct analyses of cybersecurity incident causes and of remediation options;
- conduct assessments of the scope of harm from cybersecurity incidents;
- provide information and training to state agencies and covered entities on producing reports required by regulatory and auditing bodies; and
- in collaboration with the Department of Public Safety, the Texas Military Department, the office of the attorney general, and other agencies, provide forensic analysis of a cybersecurity incident to support law enforcement and judicial actions.

Transfer of DIR functions to Texas Cyber Command. CSHB 150 would transfer certain statutory duties and functions related to cybersecurity from DIR to TCC, including:

- requesting proposals for cybersecurity emergency funding from the governor or Legislative Budget Board (LBB);

- certifying cybersecurity training programs for state and local government employees and certain contractors;
- overseeing an information sharing and analysis organization;
- submitting a cybersecurity report to the governor and legislative leadership every two years;
- receiving reports of cybersecurity incidents from state agencies and local governments;
- receiving cybersecurity vulnerability reports from state agency information security officers;
- developing a plan to address cybersecurity risks and incidents in the state;
- reviewing state agency information security plans and data security plans;
- overseeing a cybersecurity council;
- overseeing the Texas volunteer incident response team; and
- establishing and operating regional security operations centers.

Other provisions. CSHB 150 would require DIR to regularly transmit to TCC information received from state agencies related to the department's prioritized cybersecurity and legacy system's projects report to LBB. No later than October 1 of each even-numbered year, TCC would have to submit a report to LBB prioritizing state agency cybersecurity projects for funding purposes.

CSHB 150 would add one DIR employee to the required membership of the cybersecurity council that would be transferred from DIR to TCC oversight under the bill, and establish that council members would serve staggered six-year terms.

CSHB 150 would transfer cybersecurity-related functions and activities, employees, rules and forms, contracts, money, and property from DIR to TCC by December 31, 2026. No later than January 1, 2026, DIR would have to enter into a memorandum of understanding in collaboration with the TCC chief and the board of regents of the University of Texas System relating to the transfer of power and duties from DIR to TCC. The memorandum would have to include:

- a timetable for the transfer;
- measures to ensure against any unnecessary disruption to cybersecurity operations; and
- a provision that the terms of any memorandum of understanding entered into related to the transfer remained in effect until the transfer was completed.

DIR would continue to perform cybersecurity duties and exercise related powers until the date provided by the memorandum of understanding required by the bill.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2025.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

CSHB 150 would help secure Texas' vital infrastructure by creating a Texas Cyber Command specifically dedicated to enhancing cybersecurity in the state. Cyber attacks on governmental entities and critical infrastructure systems, including by entities affiliated with hostile nations, have been increasing in frequency and sophistication in recent years, overwhelming the state's current cybersecurity resources. While the Department of Information Resources has provided valuable cybersecurity prevention and response services, the agency has other responsibilities related to state technology contracts and procurement that prevent a singular focus on cybersecurity. In the absence of a single state cybersecurity authority, cyber attacks on critical infrastructure often result in conflicting guidance and duplicative work by multiple state agencies, increasing inefficiency and taxpayer costs. A specialized cybersecurity agency would enable a more comprehensive, proactive, tailored, and efficient state cybersecurity mission in Texas.

Under CSHB 150, the Texas Cyber Command would be attached to the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA). The university and city of San Antonio, known colloquially as 'Cyber City, USA,' are well situated to leverage existing cybersecurity resources and infrastructure. Attaching TCC to UTSA would help the state utilize the university's leadership in cybersecurity education to develop a workforce pipeline to fill much-needed cybersecurity positions and attract top cybersecurity talent to Texas. UTSA also plans to incorporate \$60 million of TCC's facility costs into its Permanent University Fund planning. By making a significant

investment in centralizing and strengthening cyber defense, CSHB 150 would protect and enhance the state's economic success and position Texas as a national and global leader in cybersecurity innovation.

CSHB 150 specifically outlines and narrowly tailors TCC's powers related to cybersecurity, and the agency would not be able to exceed those limits. All state agencies must adhere to existing data privacy protections, so additional measures are not necessary in this bill.

CRITICS
SAY:

CSHB 150 would expand governmental authority by giving a new agency broad operational powers, and lacks sufficient guardrails against state overreach into private markets. The bill also should include additional protections and transparency for the collection and sharing of private data.

The bill's cost and scope may not be justified since many of the functions that it would assign to TCC could be carried out by existing agencies with appropriate reforms.

NOTES:

According to the Legislative Budget Board, the bill would have a negative impact of about \$135.5 million to general revenue related funds through the biennium.

SUBJECT: Establishing and amending provisions on discipline in public schools

COMMITTEE: Public Education — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 13 ayes – Buckley, Bernal, Ashby, Bryant, Cunningham, Frank, Hinojosa, Hunter, Kerwin, Leach, Leo Wilson, Schoolcraft, Talarico

1 nay – Allen

1 absent — Dutton

WITNESSES: For - Monty Exter, Stephanie Stoebe, ATPE; Gerald Hudson, Cedar Hill ISD; Tonya Knowlton, Community ISD; Tiffany Boortz, Stephanie Howell, Candra Rogers, Corsicana ISD; Douglas Killian, CyFair ISD; Kirby Basham, Grandview ISD; Sherri Ashorn, Leslie Haack, Rahsan Smith, Katy ISD; Brent Ringo, Kerrville ISD; Jo Ann Fey, Killeen ISD; Michael Hope, Robinson ISD; Taylor Williams, Slidell ISD, TARS; Corina Bullock, Gina Zenor, Tijuana Hudson, Lindy Perkins, Texas Educational Policy Institute; Christopher Moran, Texas Association of School Administrators; Matthew McCormick, Texas Public Policy Foundation; David Hodgins, Texas School Alliance; Jessica Branch, Suzi Kennon, David Vinson, Wylie ISD; Tabitha Branum; Matthew Gibbins; Joey Light; Andrew Tatgenhorst (*Registered, but did not testify*: Joel Romo, American Heart Association; Tricia Cave, ATPE; Jay Whitehead, Brazosport Independent School District; Eugene Rogers, Corsicana High School; Maurine Molak, David’s Legacy Foundation; Roland Toscano, East Central ISD, Texas Association of School Administrators; Randal O’Brien, Goose Creek CISD; Jenifer Neatherlin, Hutto ISD; Steven Snell, Liberty Hill ISD; Mark Ruffin, Montgomery ISD; John Craft, Northside ISD; Bryan Hallmark, Sealy ISD; Colby Nichols, Texas Association of Community Schools; Amy Beneski, Texas Association of School Administrators; Rolinda Schmidt, Texas Association of School Boards; Paige Williams, Texas Classroom Teachers Association; Stephanie Holdren, Texas PTA; HD Chambers, Texas School Alliance; and 7 individuals)

Against - Maia Volk, Disability Rights Texas; Samantha Greenleaf,

Educators In Solidarity; Paige Duggins-Clay, IDRA; Debra Liva, In Child's Best Interest; Adrian Fonseca, Renuka Rege, Texas Appleseed; Sarah Reyes, Texas Center for Justice & Equity; Alycia Castillo, Mandi Zapata, Texas Civil Rights Project; Lauren Rose, Texas Network of Youth Services; Sabrina Gonzalez Saucedo, The Arc of Texas; and 6 individuals (*Registered, but did not testify*: Ananda Tomas, ACT 4 SA Action Fund; Robbi Cooper, Decoding Dyslexia Texas; Elisa M. Tamayo, El Paso County; Luis Figueroa, Every Texan; Angel Carroll, Measure; Allen Liu, Demetria L. McCain, NAACP Legal Defense Fund; Nicole Malone, National Association of Social Workers - Texas Chapter; Kristian Caballero, Crystal Tran, Texas Appleseed; Amanda Afifi, Texas Association of School Psychologists; Carrie Griffith, Texas State Teachers Association; Michelle Venegas-Matula, Texas Unitarian Universalist Justice Ministry; Patty Quinzi, TX - American Federation of Teachers; and 24 individuals)

On - Mary Lowe, Families Engaged; Anna Smith, Leander ISD; Jean Mayer, Pflugerville ISD; Andrea Chevalier, TCASE; Lauren McKenzie, Texans Care for Children; Yulissa Chavez, The Coalition of Texans with Disabilities; Alicia Markum; Melissa Ross; Steve Swanson (*Registered, but did not testify*: Eric Marin, Kristin McGuire, Marian Schutte, TEA; Marisa Iannaccone, Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities; Paula Hilliard, Texas Education 911; Rachel Gandy, Texas Juvenile Justice Department; David Ferris; Chrissy Hejny; Latronda Williams)

DIGEST:

CSHB 6 would establish and amend various provisions in the Education Code on student discipline, including suspension and expulsion.

Suspension. CSHB 6 would authorize the principal or other appropriate administrator of a school to suspend a student who engaged in conduct for which a student could be subject to an in-school or out-of-school suspension, as identified in the district's student code of conduct. An out-of-school suspension could not exceed three school days, and an in-school suspension could not exceed 10 school days. For a student enrolled in a grade below third grade, the bill would establish that the student could only be placed in out-of-school suspension if, while on school property or while attending a school-sponsored or related activity, the student engaged in conduct that:

- threatened the immediate health and safety of other students; or
- resulted in repeated or significant disruption to the classroom, as determined by the campus administrator in agreement with the classroom teacher.

The bill would remove conduct that contains the elements of a violent offense, such as assault or sexual assault, from the types of conduct that could lead to the out-of-school suspension for a student in a grade below third grade.

On a student's return to the classroom after removal, the teacher would be required to employ appropriate classroom management techniques that could reasonably be expected to improve the student's behavior and document the student's behavior that the teacher determined either:

- repeatedly interfered with the teacher's ability to communicate with the class or with the ability of the class to learn; or
- was so unruly, disruptive, or abusive that it seriously interfered with the teacher's ability to communicate with the class or with the ability of the class to learn.

Expulsion. CSHB 6 would remove a requirement that conduct requiring a student's expulsion had to occur on school property or while attending a school-sponsored or related activity on or off school property.

The bill would authorize a school district to place an expelled student in a virtual or in-person disciplinary alternative education program or a juvenile justice alternative education program. The bill also would authorize the board of trustees of a school district or the board's designee to place a student expelled for a felony offense in a virtual or in-person disciplinary alternative education program.

For a juvenile court in a county that operated a juvenile justice alternative education program, the bill would authorize the court to order an expelled student to attend a school district's virtual disciplinary alternative education program if:

- the district had established such a virtual education program; and
- the county's juvenile justice alternative education program had no available positions for the grade level of the expelled student.

Virtual disciplinary alternative education. CSHB 6 would authorize a school district's board of trustees or the board's designee to place an expelled student in a virtual disciplinary alternative education program established by the district and provide virtual instruction and instructional materials for remote learning to the student. A student placed in such a program would be required to be counted toward the district's average daily attendance for purposes of Foundation School Program funding. The education commissioner would be required to adopt necessary rules, including rules providing for a method of taking attendance for students placed in such programs.

Removal for certain conduct. CSHB 6 would remove the requirement for a student to be removed from class for possessing, using, selling, giving, or delivering to another person an e-cigarette. The bill would amend the list of offenses for off-campus conduct for which a student would be required to be removed from class and placed in a disciplinary alternative education program to include, if the student received deferred prosecution for such conduct:

- deadly conduct;
- disorderly conduct involving a firearm; and
- unlawfully carrying weapons, except for an offense punishable as a Class C misdemeanor (maximum fine of \$500).

Discipline for special education students. If a special education student was the subject of a threat assessment, the team conducting the assessment would be required to include at least one of the following professionals who had specific knowledge of the student's disability and the disability's manifestations:

- a special education teacher assigned to the student;
- a licensed behavior analyst;
- a licensed clinical or licensed master social worker; or

- a licensed specialist in school psychology.

Suit for temporary alternative placement for certain students. If, pursuant to a threat assessment conducted on a special education student, the school district in which the student was enrolled determined that the student's continued placement in the student's current educational setting was substantially likely to result in physical harm to the student or another person, the district could file a civil action for injunctive relief in a district court to authorize the district to immediately remove the student from the current educational setting and place the student in an alternative education setting. The district requesting injunctive relief would be required to show that:

- the district had made reasonable efforts to maintain the student's current educational setting and minimize the likelihood of physical harm to the student or another person; and
- despite the district's efforts, maintaining the student's current educational setting was substantially likely to result in physical harm to the student or another person.

By the fifth calendar day after the date a school district filed a civil action, the district court would be required to determine whether the school district had provided sufficient evidence to satisfy the aforementioned requirements, and, if so, could order the school district to remove the student from the student's current educational setting and place the student in an alternative educational setting for no more than 60 instructional days. In making the determination, the court would be required to consider the results of the threat assessment, any recommendations or findings made by the student's admission, review, dismissal (ARD) committee or team if the student has a disability, and any other relevant information.

On the expiration of an order to remove a special education student, the school district could file another civil action to extend the student's alternative educational setting placement if the district determined, pursuant to an additional threat assessment, that the student's return to the previous educational setting was substantially likely to result in physical harm to the student or another person.

The bill would require a school district to ensure that a student with a disability who was placed in an alternative educational setting continued to receive all required educational services.

A school district that had filed a civil action for the removal of a student would not be subject to the requirements to schedule a conference, following the removal of a student from class, between certain administrators, the student's parent or guardian, the student's teacher, and the student.

Charter schools. CSHB 6 would amend provisions on student discipline at open-enrollment charter schools. The bill would prohibit discrimination in admission policy on the basis of a student's discipline history. The bill would allow a charter to provide for the exclusion of a student who was currently:

- placed in a disciplinary alternative education program or juvenile justice alternative education program; or
- subject to an order of expulsion from a school district or charter school.

The bill would remove the authorization for a charter to provide for the exclusion of a student who had a documented history of a criminal offense, a juvenile court adjudication, or certain discipline problems.

CSHB 6 would authorize a charter to provide for the exclusion of a student from a charter school campus that included a child-care facility based on the student's conviction for a criminal offense that would preclude the student from being admitted to a school district campus that included a child-care facility.

Repeals. CSHB 6 would repeal Education Code provisions on school district student codes of conduct and expulsion for serious offenses. It would remove a provision that requires that certain student discipline methods provide that special education students not be disciplined for certain behavior until an ARD committee meeting reviews the conduct. It also would repeal a provision that authorizes the expulsion of a student

who engages in certain conduct from school by his or her district if the student engages in that conduct at another school district or while attending a school-sponsored or related activity of another school district.

The bill would make conforming changes throughout.

The bill would apply beginning with the 2025-2026 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, 2025.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

CSHB 6 would help make Texas classrooms safer for both students and teachers by expanding the authority of teachers to discipline students when necessary and allowing them to take better control of their classrooms. There has been a substantial rise in severe behavioral problems occurring in schools, and current law does not adequately serve the best interests of students and teachers. A majority of teachers have experienced at least one student being physically aggressive in class, and there has also been a rise in violence against school district employees. Classroom disruptions primarily impact the children who are already behaving and learning. The uncorrected behavioral issues of students exhibiting violence can lead to other students fearing coming to school, diminishing the positive learning outcomes they experience from their classroom environment.

By expanding the situations during which suspensions, removals from class, and expulsions could be used, the bill would give teachers and administrators the flexibility they need to keep their classrooms safe and productive learning places. Currently, many students are not adequately disciplined for severely disruptive and sometimes dangerous behavior. By prioritizing the authority of teachers to maintain discipline in their classrooms, the bill also would encourage more people to remain in the profession or pursue teaching as a career.

For many students with severe behavioral issues, the problems begin at home. By extending the maximum period for an in-school suspension to 10 days, CSHB 6 would allow teachers and administrators to remove troublesome students from class while still keeping that student at school.

While out-of-school suspensions would still be needed in some cases, in-school suspensions could help keep students in a positive learning environment at school, even if not in their classrooms. In the event of out-of-school suspensions, the bill would allow for virtual disciplinary alternative education programs. These would help students participating in these programs keep up with their peers by learning at home. This also would help involve parents in the student's education and in improving behavioral issues.

By eliminating the requirement to remove a student from class for possession of an electronic cigarette, the bill would keep students who had not had any other behavioral problems from being punished and having their learning experience disrupted.

CRITICS
SAY:

CSHB 6 would not improve discipline in Texas schools and could instead make schools more hostile environments for many students. The bill would expand in-school and out-of-school suspensions, both of which have been shown to have harmful effects on suspended students. Children in the early grades of school are often more disruptive than their older counterparts. Exclusionary disciplinary actions, including suspensions and expulsions, can result in students missing valuable learning time, experiencing lower graduation rates, and developing feelings of mistrust and detachment from school. Additionally, suspension does not address the underlying causes behind a child's misbehavior. Instead, suspension would serve to remove a young child from the classroom during a critical time of intellectual, social, and emotional development. By expanding the use of suspensions, the bill could result in more children being labeled as "problem children" and start these students down the path of further disciplinary actions and, potentially, the school-to-prison pipeline. Some of the bill's language would be too vague, and the bill would not adequately define what constituted a severe enough disruption to warrant a suspension or standards for rehabilitation and reintegration.

The bill should not include off-campus offenses for consideration in the removal of a student from class into a disciplinary alternative education program (DAEP) or for the expulsion of a student. Serious offenses committed off campus would already be dealt with by the legal system, the decision of which would determine if the student could return to the

classroom. Additionally, the virtual DAEPs established by the bill would not help correct behavioral issues. As shown during the pandemic, virtual education was not adequate to meet the academic needs of most students and left many feeling socially and emotionally isolated. Likewise, a student placed in virtual DAEP could face similar struggles.

CSHB 6 could disproportionately harm special education students, racial and ethnic minorities, homeless students, or students from other vulnerable groups who are already more likely to be the recipients of disciplinary actions in school. For example, if a student's misbehavior stems from an unsafe home environment, an out-of-school suspension could place that student in that unsafe environment for up to three days. The bill would undermine due process for students by giving teachers and administrators too much authority to determine the disciplinary action in a given situation. The bill should include more accountability mechanisms and safeguards to protect due process and ensure equitable treatment, especially for special education students.

To improve classroom discipline, the Legislature should instead fund enhanced teacher training in behavior management and de-escalation so that teachers could better resolve behavior issues before needing to remove a student from the classroom.

- SUBJECT:** Prohibiting the use of certain instructional materials in public schools
- COMMITTEE:** Public Education — favorable, without amendment
- VOTE:** 12 ayes – Buckley, Bernal, Allen, Ashby, Cunningham, Frank, Hunter, Kerwin, Leach, Leo Wilson, Schoolcraft, Talarico
- 2 nays – Bryant, Hinojosa
- 1 absent — Dutton
- WITNESSES:** For - Mary Elizabeth Castle, Texas Values (*Registered, but did not testify*: Ryan Brannan, Fieldstead & Co.; Tami Brown Rodriguez, Jaco Booyens Ministries; Gabe Grantham, Texas 2036; Cindi Castilla, Texas Eagle Forum; Jennifer Easley, Texas PTA; Jonathan Covey, Texas Values; Megan Benton, Texas Values Action; Ashley Fordinal)
- Against - (*Registered, but did not testify*: Melodia Gutierrez, Human Rights Campaign; Amber Jones, Texas AFL-CIO; Sarah Berel-Harrop; Zenobia Joseph; Alice Linahan)
- On - Misty Fisher, Instructional Material Coordinators’ Association of Texas; Colin Dempsey, Texas Education Agency (*Registered, but did not testify*: Colby Nichols, Texas Association of Community Schools; Carrie Griffith, Texas State Teachers Association)
- BACKGROUND:** Education Code 31.022(a) requires the State Board of Education to review instructional materials provided by the Texas Education Agency to determine that the material is free from factual error, suitable for the subject and grade level for which it is designed, and compliant with other applicable statutory requirements. The board is required to add each material approved to a list of approved instructional materials and may add a material not approved to a list of rejected instructional materials.
- DIGEST:** HB 100 would prohibit a school district or open-enrollment charter school from adopting or using instructional material included on the list of rejected instructional materials maintained by the State Board of

Education (SBOE). The bill also would prohibit the use of local funds and funds from the Instructional Materials and Technology Allotment to purchase instructional materials that are on the SBOE list of rejected instructional materials.

HB 100 would apply beginning with the 2025-26 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, 2025.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

By prohibiting school districts and open-enrollment charter schools from using or purchasing instructional materials that were rejected by the State Board of Education (SBOE), HB 100 would help ensure Texas students receive materials that reflect 100 percent of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) they are tested on, through the STAAR test, for example.

The majority of SBOE rejections are due to a material's failure to satisfy the requirement that instructional materials product components cover 100 percent of the TEKS for the relevant grade level and subject area, as set out in the Texas Administrative Code. The bill would strengthen SBOE's ability to ensure schools did not use materials that fail certain publicly available standards, including the TEKS, the SBOE suitability rubric, and phonics-related requirements, based on guidelines passed by the Legislature. The bill would not prevent schools from obtaining materials that were not reviewed by the board.

Additionally, applying for SBOE approval is voluntary for publishers, and there is an established collaborative process that allows publishers that opt into the process to amend materials to comply with standards before rejection by the board.

Although SBOE would have the ability to reject materials already purchased by public schools, the board would be unlikely to do so, and replacing purchased materials is worth the value of students learning the academically appropriate material.

**CRITICS
SAY:**

HB 100 would give too much authority to SBOE to prohibit schools from using or purchasing certain materials. The bill could prevent schools from teaching about certain issues like climate change, as many textbooks with

such information have been rejected by SBOE, or other issues that are important to different communities across Texas. Decisions about the appropriateness of instructional materials should be determined by school districts and their communities, which have a better idea of their students' needs than SBOE.

Additionally, the SBOE process to determine approval and rejection of instructional materials is still too new to justify a compliance requirement for school districts.

OTHER
CRITICS
SAY:

HB 100 should include an exemption for materials that were purchased prior to rejection by SBOE.

SUBJECT: Increasing school safety allotment per student and campus

COMMITTEE: Public Education — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 14 ayes – Buckley, Bernal, Allen, Ashby, Bryant, Cunningham, Frank, Hinojosa, Hunter, Kerwin, Leach, Leo Wilson, Schoolcraft, Talarico

0 nays

1 absent — Dutton

WITNESSES: For - (*Registered, but did not testify*: Tricia Cave, Association of Texas Professional Educators; Jason Sabo, Children at Risk; Garry Jones, DFER TX; Josh Sanderson, Equity Center; Kaitlyn Murphy, Greater Houston Partnership; Andrew Wright, Houston Police Officers’ Union; Carlos Ortiz, San Antonio Police Officers Association; Colby Nichols, Texas Association of Community Schools; Amy Beneski, Texas Association of School Administrators; Kelly Rasti, Texas Association of School Boards; Paige Williams, Texas Classroom Teachers Association; Andrea Chevalier, Texas Council of Administrators of Special Education; John Wilkerson, Texas Municipal Police Association; Brandon Garcia, Texas Public Charter Schools Association; HD Chambers, Texas School Alliance; Missy Bender, Texas School Coalition; Caitlyn Alexander, Texas Society of Architects; Carrie Griffith, Texas State Teachers Association; Patty Quinzi, TX-American Federation of Teachers; Sarah Berel-Harrop)

Against - None

On - Russ Johnson, Lorena ISD (*Registered, but did not testify*: Amanda Afifi, Texas Association of School Psychologists; Steve Swanson)

DIGEST: CSHB 124 would increase the annual school safety allotment under the Foundation School Program. The bill would entitle a school district to \$14 rather than \$10 for each student in average daily attendance and \$37,000 rather than \$15,000 per campus.

The bill would require each school district, by December 1 of each year, to submit to the Texas Education Agency a report accounting for the expenditure of funds received under the allotment.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2025.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

CSHB 124 would provide a substantial increase in funding for each school district in the state to spend on school safety measures. In recent sessions, the Legislature has passed laws requiring districts to implement certain measures to improve school safety, such as HB 3 by the 88th Legislature in 2023, requiring districts to have an armed security guard at every campus and provide mental health training to employees. Schools should not have to pay for school safety by pulling funding from other sources to the detriment of other important school needs. The bill would allow school districts to choose the best use of the new funds, such as paying for part-time security officers.

**CRITICS
SAY:**

CSHB 124 would be a good first step, but more funding is needed to adequately pay for school safety. The state-mandated school security requirements are expensive, and the increased funding in the bill would not fully fund all the requirements. For example, the amount by which the bill would increase the school safety allotment would not be enough to pay for a full-time armed security officer at every campus.

**OTHER
CRITICS
SAY:**

CSHB 124 would inappropriately spend government money that should be returned to taxpayers.

NOTES:

The Legislative Budget Board estimates a negative impact of about \$485.2 million in general revenue related funds for the biennium.

- SUBJECT: Establishing penalties for certain vendors pursuing contracts with schools
- COMMITTEE: Public Education — committee substitute recommended
- VOTE: 12 ayes – Buckley, Bernal, Ashby, Bryant, Cunningham, Frank, Hinojosa, Hunter, Leach, Leo Wilson, Schoolcraft, Talarico
- 0 nays
- 3 absent — Allen, Dutton, Kerwin
- WITNESSES: For - Paula Hilliard, Texas Education 911; Hollie Plemons (*Registered, but did not testify*: Tricia Cave, ATPE; Paige Williams, Texas Classroom Teachers Association; Chrissy Hejny)
- Against - (*Registered, but did not testify*: Mary Lowe, Families Engaged; Meg Bakich; Sarah Berel-Harrop; Alice Linahan)
- On - (*Registered, but did not testify*: Steve Lecholop and Eric Marin, TEA; Latronda Williams)
- DIGEST: Under CSHB 210, a vendor that bid on or received a contract from a school district or open-enrollment charter school would commit an offense if any individual serving on the board of trustees or governing body of the district or school:
- had a substantial interest in the vendor or a subcontractor hired by the vendor;
 - was related in the second degree by consanguinity or affinity to an individual who had a substantial interest in the vendor; or
 - had received or been promised a gift or in-kind services with a value of more than \$250.
- The bill would define “vendor” as a company, individual, contractor, subcontractor, or professional services provider with which a school district or open-enrollment charter school entered into an agreement, contract, memorandum of understanding, interlocal agreement, fee schedule, retainer, or similar instrument for goods or services.

An individual would have a substantial interest in a vendor if the individual owned more than 10 percent of the voting interest in the vendor or had a participating interest by shares, stock, or otherwise, in more than 10 percent of the vendor's profits, proceeds, or capital gains.

A first offense under the bill would be a class C misdemeanor (maximum fine of \$500), a second offense would be a class B misdemeanor (up to 180 days in jail and/or a maximum fine of \$2,000), and a third offense would be a class A misdemeanor (up to one year in jail and/or a maximum fine of \$4,000). Any subsequent offenses would be a state-jail felony (180 days to two years in a state jail and an optional fine of up to \$10,000). In addition, any offense under the bill would be a state jail felony if the vendor directly or indirectly used a third party to compensate the board member with money, gifts, or in-kind services in exchange for the district or school entering into a contract with the vendor.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2025.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

By establishing penalties for a vendor bidding on or receiving a contract from a school district or charter school in which a board member had a substantial interest in the vendor, CSHB 210 would ensure fairness and transparency in contracts between vendors and public schools. The penalties in the bill would deter potential offenders from pursuing contracts that would create conflicts of interest.

**CRITICS
SAY:**

While CSHB 210 would address some conflicts of interest relevant to public schools, the bill could be improved by adding representatives of the Texas Education Agency and the Legislature to the list of people whose personal interest in a vendor would disqualify the vendor from contracting with a district or school. State officials should not be allowed to make decisions that affect public schools when they or their close relatives have substantial interests in vendors doing business with schools.

SUBJECT: Making kinship caregivers eligible to receive child benefits

COMMITTEE: Human Services — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 11 ayes – Hull, Manuel, A. Davis, Dorazio, C. Morales, Noble, Richardson, Rose, Schatzline, Slawson, Swanson

0 nays

WITNESSES: For - Charles Isaac, Texas Silver Haired Legislature; Kerrie Judice, TexProtects; Gary Gerstenhaber, TSHL; Beverly Morris (*Registered, but did not testify*); Stephanie Mace, AARP Texas; Jason Sabo, Children at Risk; Jamie Olson, Feeding Texas; Carolina Cano, Houston Food Bank; Heather Mckenzie, League of Women Voters; Christine Yanas, Methodist Healthcare Ministries; Julia Hatcher, Tafda; Tessa Galloso, Texans Care for Children; Stephanie Battaglia, Texas CASA; Ben Wright, Texas Medical Association; Clayton Travis, Texas Pediatric Society; Ashley Harris, United Ways of Texas)

Against - None

On - Audrey O’Neill, DFPS; Matthew Block, Office of the Attorney General, Child Support Division

DIGEST: CSHB 215 would allow a relative or other caregiver to receive support and benefits on behalf of a child placed with the person by the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS). DFPS would be required to pass through to the caregiver any support rights and payments to which the child was entitled or that were paid for the benefit of the child, including federal Supplemental Security Income benefits.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2025.

SUPPORTERS SAY: By simplifying the process for kinship caregivers to receive available financial support, CSHB 215 would contribute to stable and healthy environments for the nearly 300,000 children placed by DFPS outside of their parents’ care. Under current law, the placement of a child in

substitute care by DFPS constitutes an assignment to the state of any support rights attributable to the child. DFPS places more children with relatives and close family friends than in traditional foster care. However, kinship caregivers, who are often seniors living on fixed retirement incomes, receive far less financial support than foster families. These challenges can make it difficult for caregivers to provide safe and supportive environments for the children in their care.

The bill would not create any new benefits. Many children in kinship placements are eligible for benefits like Supplemental Security Income (SSI), child support, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) funding, survivor benefits, and Medicaid, but these funds can be difficult to access as a caregiver. By confirming the common practice of transferring benefits to caregivers, CSHB 215 would ensure that the benefits follow the child.

Additionally, by reducing the financial burden on kinship caregivers, CSHB 215 could help encourage more kinship placements, which tend to result in better behavioral and mental health outcomes for the children.

**CRITICS
SAY:**

While CSHB 215 would be helpful to kinship caregivers when DFPS places a child in their care, the bill also should apply to informal and voluntary caregivers who experience many of the same financial difficulties.

SUBJECT: Observing daylight saving time year-round if allowed by federal law

COMMITTEE: State Affairs — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 12 ayes — King, Anchía, Darby, Y. Davis, Geren, Guillen, Hull, McQueeney, Metcalf, Phelan, Raymond, Turner

0 nays

3 absent — Hernandez, Smithee, Thompson

WITNESSES: For — Erika Boyd, Texas Travel Alliance (*Registered, but did not testify*: Travis McCormick, Make Texans Healthy Again; Ron Hinkle, Texas Travel Alliance; Justin Bragiel; Tom Glass; Nicole Haldeman; Dash Kostka; Gary Zimmerman)

Against — Sudha Tallavajhula, American Academy of Sleep Medicine; Jay Pea, Save Standard Time, Coalition for Permanent Standard Time; Vincent Mysliwicz

BACKGROUND: 15 U.S.C. sec. 260-264, or The Uniform Time Act, prohibits states from adopting permanent daylight saving time.

DIGEST: HB 1393 would require the state to observe daylight saving time year-round if the U.S. Congress enacted legislation authorizing states to do so.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2025, only if the U.S. Congress enacted the relevant legislation. Otherwise, the bill would have no effect.

SUPPORTERS SAY: HB 1393 would improve public health and foster economic growth by ending the practice of shifting the clocks twice yearly. These shifts can be inconvenient and even dangerous, as disrupting the body’s biological clock can lead to serious health issues, including increased risk of heart attacks and strokes. Adopting daylight saving time year-round would create consistency, improve evening productivity, and provide more daylight hours after the working day. Year-round daylight saving time

also would help many drivers avoid the danger of driving at sunrise and sunset, when there is a direct glare from the low sun.

Additionally, HB 1393 would help to foster economic growth for retail, entertainment, and tourism industries by leading to more purchasing activity in the evenings. More daylight hours in the evening also would allow people to take advantage of outdoor activities without relying on artificial light, which could reduce energy consumption.

While some have suggested that Texas should instead adopt standard time year-round to align with other states and countries that have taken this action, some states have also chosen to observe daylight saving time year-round if federal law allows, so Texas would not be uniquely out of sync with the time zone system. The state should do what is best for its residents regardless of the actions of other states or countries.

CRITICS
SAY:

Requiring Texas to adopt daylight saving time year-round under HB 1393 could increase health risks and cause the state to be out of sync with other states, territories, and countries. Morning light is more important than evening light for enhancing health, safety, and productivity. Daylight saving time does not align with the body's biological clock, and it would be unhealthy and unsafe to switch to a system where most Texans would have to wake up without sunlight. In addition, the bill could result in many of the state's residents driving to work drowsy and on dark roads, which could cause an increase in traffic accidents, risking lives and costing millions of dollars annually. The U.S. attempted a two-year trial run of daylight saving time year-round in 1974 and ended the practice within a year due to its unpopularity.

A better solution would be to observe standard time permanently since this system is more aligned with the body's biological clock. Some states and countries, including most of Mexico, have abolished daylight saving time in favor of standard time year-round. Aligning with these systems instead could improve trade efficiency, increase productivity, and foster greater economic prosperity.

SUBJECT: Moving the sales tax holiday weekend to the first Friday in August

COMMITTEE: Ways & Means — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 12 ayes — Meyer, Martinez Fischer, Bernal, Button, Capriglione, Gervin-Hawkins, Hickland, Noble, V. Perez, Troxclair, Turner, Vasut

0 nays

1 absent — Muñoz

WITNESSES: For — Kristy Parks (*Registered, but did not testify*: Jennifer Easley, Texas PTA)

Against — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Adam Cahn)

On — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Shannon Brandt, Comptroller of Public Accounts)

DIGEST: HB 1587 would move the sales tax holiday for qualifying clothing, footwear, and school supplies from the weekend beginning on the Friday before the 15th day preceding the fourth Monday in August to the weekend beginning on the first Friday in August.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2025.

SUPPORTERS SAY: HB 1587 would help parents save money on their children’s clothing and school supplies by moving the sales tax holiday to an earlier weekend in August. Many Texas school districts have moved their first day of classes to earlier dates in August, often days or weeks before the tax holiday weekend. As a result, parents in these districts have not been able to take advantage of the tax-free weekend to prepare their children for the start of school.

HB 1587 would better align the timing of the holiday with the time period when parents need to shop. The bill would especially benefit economically disadvantaged students whose families rely on the tax break to afford essential items for school, as well as teachers, who often have to purchase

their own school supplies. HB 1587 would help Texans across the state save money and be prepared for the first day of school.

The bill would not significantly narrow the tax base given that tax-free weekend is already an existing holiday but would simply shift the sales tax holiday earlier in the month.

**CRITICS
SAY:**

HB 1587 could reduce tax revenue and narrow the tax base by moving the tax holiday to a weekend when a higher volume of tax exempt purchases would be likely to occur. This could lead the state to shift the tax burden to other taxpayers to compensate for the loss in revenue.

- SUBJECT: Excluding certain medical decisions as grounds for ending parental rights
- COMMITTEE: Human Services — favorable, without amendment
- VOTE: 11 ayes - Hull, Manuel, A. Davis, Dorazio, C. Morales, Noble, Richardson, Rose, Schatzline, Slawson, Swanson
- 0 nays
- WITNESSES: For - Mary M. Elizabeth, Austin Justice Coalition; Lee Spiller, Citizens Commission on Human Rights; Jackie Schlegel, Texans for Medical Freedom; Sarah Bailey; Vanessa Sifuentes (*Registered, but did not testify*: Andrew Hendrickson, ACLU of Texas; Peter Hunt, Austin Justice Coalition; Brandon Logan, Family Freedom Project; Cindi Castilla, Texas Eagle Forum, President; Sarah Berel-Harrop; Alicia Costello; Lakshmi Fox; Kathy Mitchell)
- Against - None
- On - (*Registered, but did not testify*: Nicole Malone, National Association of Social Workers- Texas Chapter)
- DIGEST: HB 1151 would establish that that certain actions by a parent or guardian did not constitute clear and convincing evidence for a court to terminate the parental-child relationship. These actions would include:
- a parent’s refusal to administer or consent to the administration of a psychotropic medication or to consent to other psychiatric or psychological treatment for a child; and
 - a parent's decision to pursue a recognized alternative healthcare treatment or therapy, including those considered new, emerging, or nonstandard.
- The bill would create exceptions permitting termination if these actions posed a substantial risk of death, disfigurement, or bodily injury to the child or resulted in an observable and material impairment to the child's growth, development, or functioning.

The bill also would revise the definition of "neglect" under the Family Code to conform with these changes.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2025

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

HB 1151 would affirm the right of parents to make medical decisions for their children by clarifying that refusal to consent to psychotropic medication or psychological treatment or pursuing alternative treatment would not, on its own, constitute neglect or support termination of parental rights. This standard would promote parental autonomy in medical decisions regarding their children, particularly children in the care of the Department of Family Protective Services (DFPS).

The bill also would support parental rights by recognizing the use of alternative therapies, such as dietary, exercise, or counseling-based approaches, as protected parental choices unless they posed a substantial threat to a child's safety or development. HB 1151 would reduce the need for state investigations, thus reducing state financial obligations, and ensure that families were not separated over treatment disagreements with doctors unless there was a clear and substantial risk of harm.

**CRITICS
SAY:**

HB 1151 could be limited in its ability to protect children from neglect or protect parents from wrongful termination of their parental rights because the language would be too vague, and, as such, could apply too broadly to a selection of cases. The bill's terms, such as "material impairment" and "nonstandard treatment," lack clear definitions and could either restrict DFPS's ability to intervene in cases that warranted child removal or result in wrongful separation of a family. These broad and undefined terms also could allow actions to be taken that did not align with medical and psychological best practices, and, as a result, harmed or marginalized already at-risk children, such as transgender youth.

- SUBJECT:** Establishing the Texas Technology and Innovation Program
- COMMITTEE:** Trade, Workforce & Economic Development — committee substitute recommended
- VOTE:** 9 ayes – Button, Talarico, K. Bell, Bhojani, Harris Davila, Longoria, Lujan, Meza, Ordaz
- 2 nays – Luther, Richardson
- WITNESSES:** For - Brent Kaiser, Space Force Association (SFA) - TX Gulf Coast Chapter President, TX Space Alliance Partner, National Security Innovation Council (NSIC) Member, Space Workforce Incubator For TX (SWIFT) Ambassador; Glenn Hamer, Texas Association of Business; Victoria Ford, Texas Healthcare and Bioscience Institute (*Registered, but did not testify*); Denise Rose, AstraZeneca; Melissa Shannon, Bexar County Commissioners Court; Eric Woomeer, Biotechnology Innovation Organization; Alexa Aragonz, City of Houston; Josie Castro Garcia, Dallas County; Rebekah Chenelle, Dallas Regional Chamber; Myra Leo, GlaxoSmithKline GSK; Laura Alexander, Greater Houston Partnership; John Kroll, HMWK, LLC; Susan Ross, Johnson & Johnson; Jeff Burdett, NFIB; Matt Creel, Opportunity Austin; Renzo Soto, TechNet; Kyle Bush, Texas Association of Manufacturers; Matt Abel, Texas Economic Development Council; Caitlin Flanders, Texas Healthcare Bioscience Institute; Ashley McPhail, Texas Medical Center; Thomas Parkinson)
- Against - (*Registered, but did not testify*: Aaron Taliaferro, Tarrant County Administrator's Office)
- BACKGROUND:** 15 USC sec. 638 establishes the federal Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) programs to provide grants for U.S.-based small businesses to research and develop innovative technologies. The federal government awards SBIR funds directly to small businesses, while STTR funding requires collaboration with a nonprofit research institution. Both programs fund projects in two phases: phase one for feasibility studies and phase two for further development.

DIGEST: CSHB 1268 would require the Texas Economic Development and Tourism Office to create and manage the Texas Technology and Innovation Program. The program would match or supplement money received by business entities in Texas through the federal Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) or Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) programs.

To be eligible for funding under the program, a business would have to:

- either be organized under state law or maintain headquarters, a manufacturing facility, or a majority of employees in Texas;
- meet all federal requirements to receive money under SBIR or STTR phase one or phase two, or similar stages;
- not receive funding from another state program with the same purpose; and
- meet additional requirements for the phase under which the entity applied.

Businesses would be required to submit an application under oath, including certain business details and certification of eligibility for SBIR or STTR. Applicants also would be required to provide a federal notice of the award and a final report for the applicable phase. Additionally, phase one applicants would be required to provide a proposal for the next stage. Grants could be awarded when an applicant met the applicable documentation requirements. A business could not receive more than one grant per fiscal year and would be limited to five grants per phase. Grants could only be assigned with written consent from the office.

The Texas Economic Development and Tourism Office would be required to fund the program using available money or funds appropriated for this purpose. The office could solicit and receive donations or other contributions to provide additional funding.

The office would be required to adopt rules to implement the program as soon as practicable after the bill's effective date. If funding was not specifically provided during a fiscal year to implement a provision of the bill, the office would not be required to implement that provision but could implement it if other funding was available. If the office did not

implement a provision, it would be required to notify the Legislative Budget Board and include cost estimates in its next legislative budget request.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2025.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

CSHB 1268 would enhance Texas's economic competitiveness by enabling the state to match federal innovation grants through the Texas Technology and Innovation Program. Without a program for matching federal SBIR and STTR funding, Texas is at an economic disadvantage compared to other states that already offer similar programs. This may discourage startups and research-driven businesses from locating or remaining in Texas, especially during the early stages of development when maximum financial support is most critical. By providing supplemental funding, the program would help businesses navigate the transition from research to commercialization, allowing them to address costs not covered by federal grants, such as marketing. The program would use state resources to build on existing federal investments and help innovative companies scale their operations.

CSHB 1268 would bring potential workforce and economic benefits, particularly in emerging industries such as biotechnology and aerospace, where growth is projected and skilled labor is in demand. The bill would provide an opportunity to reinforce Texas's position as a hub for innovation, support homegrown technology, and attract new investment and talent.

CSHB 1268 would include provisions stating that the program was not mandatory unless funding was specifically appropriated. This language would ensure that the state maintained control over its financial obligations and was not automatically bound to match increases in federal grant funding.

**CRITICS
SAY:**

CSHB 1268 could create an unpredictable financial commitment by tying state funding to a federal program since the amount the state would need to allocate could fluctuate significantly as federal funding amounts shifted. If federal appropriations increased, the state could be obligated to provide matching funds beyond what was initially planned or

appropriated, and the bill would lack clear limits or mechanisms to adjust the program in response to such changes. This could lead to challenges in fiscal planning and constrain resources that might otherwise be directed toward more predictable state programs.

NOTES:

According to the Legislative Budget Board, CSHB 1268 would have a negative impact of about \$1.9 million through the biennium.

SUBJECT: Amending administrative and reporting requirements for HHSC OIG

COMMITTEE: Human Services — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 11 ayes – Hull, Manuel, A. Davis, Dorazio, C. Morales, Noble, Richardson, Rose, Schatzline, Slawson, Swanson

0 nays

WITNESSES: For - (*Registered, but did not testify*: Ben Wright, Texas Medical Association)

Against - None

On - Raymond Winter, HHSC Office of Inspector General (*Registered, but did not testify*: Susan Biles, HHSC Office of Inspector General)

DIGEST: CSHB 142 would amend certain provisions relating to the Office of Inspector General (OIG) in the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC), including administrative duties, witness procurement, information sharing, and reporting practices.

The bill would remove provisions establishing the process through which HHSC could award a contract for review of investigative findings, instead establishing that a qualified expert retained by HHSC to review investigative findings on behalf of the OIG is considered an expert witness in legal proceedings.

OIG would be permitted to disclose information obtained in the course of conducting oversight activities to certain federal, state, or local governmental entities or a person authorized by the OIG to receive the information.

The bill would amend requirements related to criminal history record information to specify that OIG was prohibited from conducting fingerprint-based criminal history checks of health care providers who are confirmed as licensed and in good standing, except as required by federal law.

CSHB 142 would remove language requiring that HHSC maintain and promote a toll-free telephone hotline for reporting suspected fraud, instead requiring HHSC to maintain and promote an appropriate communications system. The bill would repeal the requirements for annual review of Medicaid reimbursement claims for potential cases of fraud or abuse and the requirement that the OIG begin a preliminary investigation within 30 days of identifying potential fraud and complete the investigation no later than the 45th day.

If a state agency determined that a waiver or authorization from a federal agency was necessary to implement the bill, the agency would be required to request the waiver and could delay implementation until the waiver or authorization was granted.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2025.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

CSHB 142 would update state law to help the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) within the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) operate more efficiently and align the procurement process for an expert witness with that of other state agencies. The bill also would address discrepancies in laws related to background check processes while preserving safeguards for necessary investigations. CSHB 142 would modernize the fraud hotline by giving the agency flexibility in how it receives reports, allowing better use of resources and likely increasing the number of meaningful reports made. Additionally, the bill would shift the OIG's focus to a more data-driven approach by removing outdated Medicaid review requirements that are time-consuming and yield limited results.

**CRITICS
SAY:**

No concerns identified.

SUBJECT: Requiring screening of certain children for risk of sex trafficking

COMMITTEE: Human Services — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 11 ayes – Hull, Manuel, A. Davis, Dorazio, C. Morales, Noble,
Richardson, Rose, Schatzline, Slawson, Swanson

0 nays

WITNESSES: For - John Nehme, Allies Against Slavery; Caroline Roberts, Children at Risk; Rhonda Kuykendall MSW, Texas Human Trafficking Survivor Leader Council (*Registered, but did not testify*: Melissa Shannon, Bexar County Commissioners Court; Elisa M. Tamayo, El Paso County; Ana O'Quin, Girls Empowerment Network; Santiago Franco, Harris County Commissioners Court; Andrea Sparks, Not On Our Watch Texas; Ayaan Moledina, Students Engaged in Advancing Texas; Sarah Crockett, Texas CASA; Amanda Tollett, Texas Medical Association; Lauren Rose, Texas Network of Youth Services; Clayton Travis, Texas Pediatric Society; Brianna Waldock, TexProtects; Jennifer Allmon, The Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops; Julie Wheeler, Travis County Commissioners Court; Thomas Parkinson)

Against - None

On - (*Registered, but did not testify*: Nathan McDaniel, Texas Juvenile Justice Department)

DIGEST: CSHB 451 would require certain children in state conservatorship or under juvenile probation to be screened for risk of commercial sexual exploitation. The screening would use a validated, evidence-informed tool selected by the Child Sex Trafficking Prevention Unit within the criminal justice division of the Office of the Governor.

For children in the conservatorship of the Department of Family Protective Services (DFPS), the bill would add the screening requirement to the developmentally appropriate comprehensive assessment that DFPS is required to conduct within 45 days after a child enters conservatorship. The bill would only require a child to be screened if validation guidelines

based on the child's age indicated the screening was appropriate or concerns of commercial sexual exploitation existed.

The bill would require juvenile probation departments to include the screening in the risk and needs assessment that must be completed for each child under the department's jurisdiction before disposition of the child's case.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2025.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

CSHB 451 would help identify children at risk of commercial sexual exploitation earlier by expanding the use of a statewide validated screening tool. The bill would fill current gaps by requiring consistent screening practices across regions and systems. Youth in foster care and the juvenile justice system face an increased risk of exploitation, and early identification through screening can help them access support services, including early intervention. The screener does not involve direct interviews with children and instead relies on case file information from DFPS and juvenile justice systems to reduce the risk of re-traumatization. The bill would better protect vulnerable children, prevent trafficking before it occurs, and provide more effective and efficient use of state resources.

**CRITICS
SAY:**

No concerns identified.