

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

C.S.H.B. 553  
By: White  
Corrections  
Committee Report (Substituted)

### **BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE**

Interested parties contend that formerly incarcerated individuals face barriers to obtaining employment on release because many do not have a traditional resume or work history. C.S.H.B. 553 seeks to address this issue by creating a task force to identify opportunities for these individuals to demonstrate their skills to prospective employers.

### **CRIMINAL JUSTICE IMPACT**

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly create a criminal offense, increase the punishment for an existing criminal offense or category of offenses, or change the eligibility of a person for community supervision, parole, or mandatory supervision.

### **RULEMAKING AUTHORITY**

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

### **ANALYSIS**

C.S.H.B. 553 amends the Education Code to require the Windham School District, in consultation with the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ), to establish a task force to review the work or other productive activities in which persons confined or imprisoned in TDCJ engage. The bill sets out the composition of the task force, requires the governor to designate a task force member to serve as presiding officer, and requires a vacancy on the task force to be filled in the same manner as the initial appointment. The bill prohibits a task force member from receiving compensation for service on the task force but entitles a member to reimbursement for actual and necessary expenses incurred in performing task force duties. The bill authorizes the task force to accept gifts and grants from any source to be used to carry out a function of the task force and requires the task force to meet at least quarterly at the call of the presiding officer and at other times as determined by the presiding officer.

C.S.H.B. 553 requires the task force to conduct an ongoing comprehensive review of the work or other productive activities in which persons confined or imprisoned in TDCJ engage and to identify opportunities for the award of high school credit, college credit, or joint high school and college credit, or the award of an industry-recognized credential or certificate, for engaging in that work or activity. The bill requires the Windham School District, in consultation with TDCJ, the Texas Education Agency, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, and the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC), to determine, for any type of work or productive activity for which an opportunity is so identified, the actions necessary for obtaining the award of the applicable academic credit or industry recognition. The bill requires the task force, not less than once every four years, to submit to the governor, the lieutenant governor, the speaker of the house of representatives, and the standing committees of the legislature having jurisdiction over TDCJ a report that summarizes the review conducted by the task force and the district's actions with regard to obtaining the award of academic credit or industry recognition. The bill adds a

temporary provision set to expire February 1, 2021, requiring the task force to submit the first report not later than December 31, 2020. The bill requires the district to provide the task force with any information necessary to complete the report. The bill exempts the task force from Government Code provisions relating to state agency advisory committees.

C.S.H.B. 553 requires the executive director of TDCJ, the superintendent of the Windham School District, the commissioner of higher education, the executive director of the TWC, and the governor to appoint members to the task force in the manner required by the bill's provisions not later than December 1, 2017.

### **EFFECTIVE DATE**

September 1, 2017.

### **COMPARISON OF ORIGINAL AND SUBSTITUTE**

While C.S.H.B. 553 may differ from the original in minor or nonsubstantive ways, the following comparison is organized and formatted in a manner that indicates the substantial differences between the introduced and committee substitute versions of the bill.

#### INTRODUCED

SECTION 1. Chapter 19, Education Code, is amended by adding Section 19.012 to read as follows:

Sec. 19.012. TASK FORCE ON ACADEMIC CREDIT AND INDUSTRY RECOGNITION. (a) The Windham School District, in consultation with the department, shall establish a task force to review the work or other productive activities in which persons confined or imprisoned in the department engage.

(b) The task force is composed of the following seven members:

(1) two representatives of the department designated by the executive director of the department;

(2) one representative of the district designated by the superintendent of the district;

(3) one representative of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board designated by the commissioner of higher education;

(4) one representative of the Texas Workforce Commission designated by the executive director of the commission;

(5) one representative of a private vendor operating a correctional facility under a contract with the department, appointed by the governor; and

(6) one representative of a public junior college, as defined by Section 61.003,

#### HOUSE COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE

SECTION 1. Chapter 19, Education Code, is amended by adding Section 19.012 to read as follows:

Sec. 19.012. TASK FORCE ON ACADEMIC CREDIT AND INDUSTRY RECOGNITION. (a) The Windham School District, in consultation with the department, shall establish a task force to review the work or other productive activities in which persons confined or imprisoned in the department engage.

(b) The task force is composed of the following nine members:

(1) two representatives of the department designated by the executive director of the department;

(2) one representative of the district designated by the superintendent of the district;

(3) one representative of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board designated by the commissioner of higher education;

(4) one representative of the Texas Workforce Commission designated by the executive director of the commission;

(5) one representative of a private vendor operating a correctional facility under a contract with the department, appointed by the governor; and

(6) three representatives of public junior colleges, as defined by Section 61.003, that provide education services to persons confined or imprisoned in the department,

appointed by the governor.

(c) The governor shall designate a member of the task force to serve as presiding officer.

(d) A vacancy on the task force shall be filled in the same manner as the initial appointment.

(e) A member of the task force may not receive compensation for service on the task force, but is entitled to reimbursement for actual and necessary expenses incurred in performing task force duties.

(f) The task force may accept gifts and grants from any source to be used to carry out a function of the task force.

(g) The task force shall meet at least quarterly at the call of the presiding officer and at other times as determined by the presiding officer.

(h) The task force shall:

(1) conduct an ongoing comprehensive review of the work or other productive activities in which persons confined or imprisoned in the department engage; and

(2) identify opportunities for the award of high school credit, college credit, or joint high school and college credit, or the award of an industry-recognized credential or certificate, for engaging in that work or activity.

(i) The district, in consultation with the department, the Texas Education Agency, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, and the Texas Workforce Commission, shall for any type of work or productive activity for which an opportunity is identified under Subsection (h), determine the actions necessary for obtaining the award of the applicable academic credit or industry recognition.

(j) Not less than once every four years, the task force shall submit to the governor, the lieutenant governor, the speaker of the house of representatives, and the standing committees of the legislature having jurisdiction over the department a report that summarizes the review conducted under Subsection (h) and the district's actions with regard to obtaining the award of academic credit or industry recognition under Subsection (i). The district shall provide the task force with any information necessary to complete the report.

(k) Chapter 2110, Government Code, does not apply to the task force established under

appointed by the governor.

(c) The governor shall designate a member of the task force to serve as presiding officer.

(d) A vacancy on the task force shall be filled in the same manner as the initial appointment.

(e) A member of the task force may not receive compensation for service on the task force, but is entitled to reimbursement for actual and necessary expenses incurred in performing task force duties.

(f) The task force may accept gifts and grants from any source to be used to carry out a function of the task force.

(g) The task force shall meet at least quarterly at the call of the presiding officer and at other times as determined by the presiding officer.

(h) The task force shall:

(1) conduct an ongoing comprehensive review of the work or other productive activities in which persons confined or imprisoned in the department engage; and

(2) identify opportunities for the award of high school credit, college credit, or joint high school and college credit, or the award of an industry-recognized credential or certificate, for engaging in that work or activity.

(i) The district, in consultation with the department, the Texas Education Agency, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, and the Texas Workforce Commission, shall for any type of work or productive activity for which an opportunity is identified under Subsection (h), determine the actions necessary for obtaining the award of the applicable academic credit or industry recognition.

(j) Not less than once every four years, the task force shall submit to the governor, the lieutenant governor, the speaker of the house of representatives, and the standing committees of the legislature having jurisdiction over the department a report that summarizes the review conducted under Subsection (h) and the district's actions with regard to obtaining the award of academic credit or industry recognition under Subsection (i). The district shall provide the task force with any information necessary to complete the report.

(k) Chapter 2110, Government Code, does not apply to the task force established under

this section.

(1) The task force shall submit the first report required under Subsection (j) not later than December 31, 2020. This subsection expires February 1, 2021.

SECTION 2. Not later than December 1, 2017, the executive director of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, the superintendent of the Windham School District, the commissioner of higher education, the executive director of the Texas Workforce Commission, and the governor shall appoint members to the task force established by Section 19.012, Education Code, as added by this Act, in the manner required by Subsection (b) of that section.

SECTION 3. This Act takes effect September 1, 2017.

this section.

(1) The task force shall submit the first report required under Subsection (j) not later than December 31, 2020. This subsection expires February 1, 2021.

SECTION 2. Same as introduced version.

SECTION 3. Same as introduced version.