

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 4023
By: Martinez
Public Education
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Mental health and counseling for school children is an important issue in Texas. Although high school counselors are in a unique position to enact serious change, they often find themselves occupied with administrative work. H.B. 4023 seeks to address this issue by establishing a life skills counselor pilot program as a strategy for addressing emotional and mental health concerns of students at public high school campuses in certain counties.

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 rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the commissioner of education in SECTION 1 of this bill.

ANALYSIS

H.B. 4023 amends the Education Code to require the commissioner of education to establish a life skills counselor pilot program as a strategy for addressing emotional and mental health concerns of students at each high school campus located in a county that meets the following criteria:

- is adjacent to:
 - at least two counties that border the Gulf of Mexico; and
 - at least two counties that are located on the international border; and
- is located within 50 miles of such a county.

The bill requires a public school district located in an applicable county to employ for each high school campus located in the county a certified school counselor to serve as a life skills counselor under the pilot program and sets out the duties of the life skills counselor.

H.B. 4023 authorizes a district in an applicable county to solicit and accept a gift, grant, or donation from any source, including a foundation, private entity, governmental entity, or institution of higher education to implement or administer the pilot program. The bill requires the commissioner, not later than December 1, 2021, to adopt rules necessary to administer the pilot program and requires the program to be implemented in each public high school located in an applicable county beginning with the 2022-2023 school year.

H.B. 4023 requires the commissioner, not later than January 1, 2027, to review the pilot program and submit a written report regarding the progress made by the program in addressing emotional and mental health concerns of students to the governor, the lieutenant governor, the speaker of the house of representatives, and the presiding officer of each legislative standing committee with primary jurisdiction over primary and secondary education.

The provisions of H.B. 4023 expire September 1, 2027.

EFFECTIVE DATE

On passage, or, if the bill does not receive the necessary vote, September 1, 2021.