

SUBJECT: Reciprocity for out-of-state teachers for teacher certification exam

COMMITTEE: Public Education — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 7 ayes — Sadler, Dunnam, Grusendorf, Hardcastle, Hochberg, Olivo, Smith
0 nays
1 absent — Dutton, Oliveira

WITNESSES: For — Michele Molter, Association of Texas Professional Educators
Against — None

BACKGROUND: Under Education Code, chapter 21, to be a certified elementary or secondary teacher in Texas, a person must, among other requirements, pass certification exams required by the State Board of Educator Certification (SBEC). A teacher certified by another state who wishes to receive certification in Texas must hold a bachelor's degree and pass the certification exam.

DIGEST: CSHB 1721 would allow a teacher certified by another state to meet the examination requirement for Texas certification by having passed a certification exam in the teacher's certifying state that SBEC determined was similar to and at least as rigorous as Texas' exam.

This 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, 2001.

SUPPORTERS SAY: CSHB 1721 would make a positive change in Texas's teacher certification program that would increase the pool of teachers without jeopardizing standards. One study found that Texas schools could not fill all the positions they had open in the 2000-01 school year and that one-quarter of the new hires were not certified fully in all the subjects they were assigned to teach. The deficiencies were concentrated in particular disciplines — specifically, more than 8,000 secondary math, science, foreign language, and bilingual education positions went unfilled.

By simplifying certification of teachers who already are qualified, CSHB 1721 would help alleviate the state's teacher shortage quickly, inexpensively, and in a way that likely would reduce the number of uncertified or incompletely certified teachers in the classroom.

Moreover, by allowing SBEC to waive the Texas exam only if the out-of-state examination was at least as rigorous as Texas' exam, the bill would maintain Texas' educational standards.

OPPONENTS
SAY:

CSHB 1721 would give SBEC discretion to determine which state's certification examinations were as rigorous as Texas'. SBEC might be too lenient in evaluating out-of-state examinations out of a desire to certify more teachers. The result could be certification of teachers who might not be sufficiently qualified.

Also, CSHB 1721 could divert attention from longer-term solutions to the teacher shortage problem, such as encouraging more Texans to seek teacher certification. Programs that promote "homegrown" teachers — for example, efforts to encourage teacher's aides to complete their education and obtain certification — could be more successful in the long run, as well as providing career and educational opportunities to Texans who need them.

NOTES:

The bill as filed would have allowed SBEC to issue Texas certifications to all out-of-state certified teachers in the areas in which they were certified. The committee substituted provisions of a related bill, HB 2174 by Hochberg.

Another related bill, HB 1525 by Garcia, which would allow certification of advanced degree holders from foreign universities in specific subjects if the applicant passed the state certification exam, was considered in a public hearing by the House Public Education Committee on March 13 and left pending.

According to the bill's fiscal note, evaluating the comparability of Texas' and other states' teacher certification examinations would cost about \$543,400 in

HB 1721
House Research Organization
page 3

general revenue in fiscal 2002-03. In future years, the expected cost would decline to about \$353,500 per biennium.