SUBJECT: Addressing career and technology education provided by public schools

COMMITTEE: Public Education — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 8 ayes — Huberty, Bernal, Bohac, Dutton, Gooden, K. King, Koop, VanDeaver

0 nays

3 absent — Allen, Deshotel, Meyer

WITNESSES: For — Priscilla Camacho, San Antonio Chamber of Commerce; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Drew Scheberle, Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce; Chris Frandsen, League of Women Voters of Texas; Annie Spilman, National Federation of Independent Business/Texas; Seth Rau, San Antonio ISD; Caroline Joiner, TechNet; Stephanie Simpson, Texas Association of Manufacturers; Michael White, Texas Construction Association; Kyle Ward, Texas PTA; Mike Meroney, Texas Workforce Coalition, BASF Corporation, and Huntsman Corporation; Cherise Rohr-Allegrini)

Against — None

On — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Kara Belew, Monica Martinez, Shelly Ramos, and Quentin Suffren, Texas Education Agency)

BACKGROUND: Education Code, sec. 28.002 requires each school district that offers K-12 instruction to offer a foundational curriculum of math, science, English, and social studies, and an enrichment curriculum that includes career and technology education, technology applications, and other subject areas.

Sec. 28.025(b-1) requires high school students to take certain courses for the foundational curriculum, including two credits in the same foreign language. Sec. 28.025(b-12) allows computer programming languages to satisfy the foreign language requirement.

Sec. 28.025(c-1) allows high school students to complete specific courses to earn an endorsement on their transcript in one of five areas, including in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).

Concerns have been raised that Texas' public education system is not equipped to meet the workforce needs of businesses and government agencies as these industries face cybersecurity threats. To grow a skilled workforce, students need access to the latest programs, hardware, and internships that focus on the cybersecurity industry.

DIGEST:

CSHB 3593 would make certain changes regarding cybersecurity-related curricula and programs in public schools.

Curriculum. Technology applications courses would be included under career and technology education. As soon as practicable after the effective date of the bill, the State Board of Education (SBOE) would be required to modify the essential knowledge and skills of the career and technology education curriculum to conform with this change.

A school district could offer a course in cybersecurity that was approved by the board of trustees for credit without obtaining SBOE approval if the district partners with an institution of higher education that offered an undergraduate degree program in cybersecurity to develop and provide the course. A cybersecurity course provided by a campus or extension center for this purpose would not be subject to the approval of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

The school district would be required to annually report to the Texas Education Agency the names of the cybersecurity courses and institutions of higher education in which students have enrolled.

Graduation credit. The SBOE would be required to approve courses in cybersecurity for high school graduation credit. High school students could take computer coding courses to satisfy the two-credit foreign language requirement. Courses in cybersecurity and computer coding would qualify for the STEM endorsement option.

New instructional facility allotment. A school district could use funds allotted for expenses associated with opening a new instructional facility to renovate an existing facility to serve as a dedicated cybersecurity computer laboratory.

Subsidy for certification exam. A teacher would be entitled to a subsidy after passing a certification examination related to cybersecurity.

Technology literacy assessment pilot program. The assessment instrument that the SBOE adopted to use in a pilot program that assessed student technology proficiency would have to measure relevant essential knowledge and skills requirements for career and technology education relating to technology applications.

Public school accountability. In evaluating the performance of high schools and districts with high schools, the commissioner of education would adopt as a performance indicator the percentage of students who successfully completed a practicum or internship approved by the SBOE.

Effective date. 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, 2017, and would apply beginning with the 2017-2018 school year.

NOTES:

According the Legislative Budget Board, the bill would have an estimated negative impact of around $45 million to general revenue related funds through fiscal 2018-19, with a similar impact in subsequent biennia.