

**SUBJECT:** Expanding the uses of the instructional materials and technology fund

**COMMITTEE:** Public Education — favorable, without amendment

**VOTE:** 12 ayes — Huberty, Bernal, Allen, Allison, Ashby, K. Bell, M. González, K. King, Meyer, Sanford, Talarico, VanDeaver

0 nays

1 absent — Dutton

**WITNESSES:** For — Wayne Schaper, Instructional Material Coordinators' Association of Texas (IMCAT); Jennifer Bergland, Texas Computer Education Association; (*Registered, but did not testify:* Deborah Caldwell, North East Independent School District; Ted Raab, Texas American Federation of Teachers (Texas AFT); Barry Haenisch, Texas Association of Community Schools; Casey McCreary, Texas Association of School Administrators; Dominic Giarratani, Texas Association of School Boards; Michael Barba, Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops; Jerod Patterson, Texas Rural Education Association; Buck Gilcrease, Texas School Alliance; Lisa Dawn-Fisher, Texas State Teachers Association; Tracy Fisher)

Against — (*Registered, but did not testify:* Adam Cahn, Cahnman's Musings)

On — (*Registered, but did not testify:* Monica Martinez, Texas Education Agency)

**BACKGROUND:** Education Code sec. 31.021 establishes a fund for school districts and open-enrollment charter schools to use for certain costs associated with instructional materials and technology.

Sec. 31.0211 entitles school districts and open-enrollment charter schools to an enrollment-based allotment from the state instructional materials and technology fund. This allotment may be used to buy certain instructional

materials and technology.

**DIGEST:** HB 396 would allow school districts and open-enrollment charter schools to use the instructional materials and technology fund for out-of-state shipping costs associated with the purchase of instructional materials.

The bill also would allow schools to use funds allotted from the instructional materials and technology fund to purchase inventory software or systems for storing and accessing instructional materials.

This bill would take effect September 1, 2019.

**SUPPORTERS SAY:** HB 396 would allow school districts and open-enrollment charter schools greater flexibility in purchasing technology and instructional materials. Expanding the allowable uses of the instructional materials and technology fund to include out-of-state shipping costs would better allow schools to make cost-effective, student-centered purchases and to acquire materials in accordance with student need.

The bill also would address a rule change adopted by the Texas Education Agency after the 85th regular legislative session that prohibited schools from using the instructional materials and technology allotment to pay for inventory software. Inventory software helps ensure schools' materials are efficiently tracked and managed, and its purchase should be covered by the allotment, as it was before the rule change.

**OPPONENTS SAY:** Expanding the acceptable uses of the technology and instructional materials allotment under HB 396 would be an inappropriate use of public funds. School districts and open-enrollment charter schools should not be granted increased purchasing authority or be allowed to enter into a technology contract.

OTHER  
OPPONENTS  
SAY:

HB 396 would not go far enough in expanding the acceptable use of the technology and instructional materials allotment. School districts should be allowed to use the allotment to cover the cost of software for managing instructional materials and for software that analyzes the materials' use and effectiveness. Allowing this use of the funds would help school districts better manage their materials and make more informed decisions about future purchases, which would help improve student outcomes.