

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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C.S.S.B. 382
By: Van de Putte et al.
Education
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Committee Report (Substituted)

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Many children who ultimately fail in school start out with reading difficulties. One in four adults in Texas reads below the fifth grade level. Extensive research shows that children learn from the moment they are born. Early language skills, the foundation for later reading ability, are based primarily on language exposure resulting from parents and other adults talking to young children. Reading aloud to a child provides the richest exposure to language and also builds a child's motivation, curiosity, and memory. Research shows that children who hear fewer words in their first three years are engaged in less conversations and have dramatically smaller vocabularies than children who have greater early language experiences. Too much essential time is lost before a child enters kindergarten.

This bill provides the resources to make literacy promotion a standard part of pediatric primary care by utilizing the Reach Out and Read national model. Reach Out and Read trains doctors and nurses to advise parents about the importance of reading aloud and of giving books to children at pediatric checkups from six months to five years of age.

C.S.S.B. 382 amends current law relating to a competitive grant program to fund promotion of early literacy programs in certain communities in this state.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Chapter 73, Education Code, by adding Subchapter I, as follows:

SUBCHAPTER I. COMPETITIVE GRANT PROGRAM TO PROMOTE EARLY LITERACY

Sec. 73.601. DEFINITIONS. Defines "competitive grant program," "health care practitioner," "health science center," and "literacy program."

Sec. 73.602. ESTABLISHMENT OF COMPETITIVE GRANT PROGRAM TO PROMOTE EARLY LITERACY. (a) Requires The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston (health science center) to establish a competitive grant program (program) to promote early literacy through which the health science center will award grants for the implementation of literacy programs, or the extension of existing programs, and for the operation of those programs for a period of not less than two years.

(b) Requires the health science center to award grants under the program to applicants, including applicants operating existing programs, in a manner that ensures that the literacy programs collectively operate in multiple communities that are geographically distributed throughout this state and provide program services to approximately 50,000 families.

Sec. 73.603. LITERACY PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS. (a) Requires that a literacy program funded through a grant awarded under this subchapter:

(1) strictly adhere to the program model developed by the Reach Out and Read National Center (national center), including any clinical, programmatic, and data collection requirements of that model;

(2) provide matching funds in an amount equal to the amount of the grant funds awarded under this subchapter;

(3) require that health care practitioners volunteer to, in conjunction with performing well-child examinations, provide books to children and encourage parents to read to their children to develop preliteracy skills, maintain waiting rooms that encourage children to read, and provide services designed to increase the school readiness of children receiving program services; and

(4) partner with local adult literacy providers to encourage parent literacy in appropriate circumstances.

(b) Authorizes matching funds under Subsection (a)(2) to include in-kind contributions.

Sec. 73.604. APPLICATION. (a) Authorizes a public or private entity, including a county, municipality, or other political subdivision of this state, to apply for a grant under this subchapter.

(b) Requires an applicant, to apply for a grant, to submit a written application to the health science center on a form prescribed by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in consultation with the national center.

Sec. 73.605. ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS IN AWARDING GRANTS. Requires the health science center, in addition to the factors described by Sections 73.602(b) and 73.603, in determining whether to award a grant to an applicant under this subchapter, to consider certain factors.

Sec. 73.606. LITERACY PROGRAM GUIDELINES. Requires the health science center, with the assistance of the national center, to publish guidelines for the literacy programs funded under this subchapter. Requires that the guidelines adhere to the Reach Out and Read national program model standards and guidelines that have been tested and replicated in multiple communities.

Sec. 73.607. USE OF PROGRAM FUNDS. (a) Authorizes the health science center, in addition to awarding grants under this subchapter, to use program funds to administer the competitive grant program, and purchase or contract to purchase discounted books for use by grant recipients.

(b) Authorizes a grant recipient to use grant funds awarded under this subchapter only to cover costs related to implementing or expanding and operating a literacy program, including costs related to administering the literacy program, training and managing health care practitioners who volunteer to participate in the literacy program, and purchasing or contracting to purchase discounted books for use in the literacy program.

Sec. 73.608. PROGRAM MONITORING AND EVALUATION; ANNUAL COMMITTEE REPORTS. (a) Requires the health science center, with the assistance of the national center, to publish performance indicators that are designed to measure a grant recipient's performance with respect to the literacy program standards adopted under Section 73.606.

(b) Requires the health science center to use the performance indicators adopted under Subsection (a) to continuously monitor and formally evaluate on an annual basis the performance of each grant recipient, and prepare and submit an annual report to certain legislative entities not later than December 1 of each year

regarding the performance of each grant recipient during the preceding state fiscal year with respect to providing literacy program services.

(c) Requires that the report under Subsection (b) include certain information concerning the number of low-income children and participating practitioners, and the extent to which grant recipients adhered to the program model.

(d) Requires each grant recipient, on request, to timely collect and provide data and any other information required by the health science center to monitor and evaluate the recipient or to prepare the report required by this section.

Sec. 73.609. COMPETITIVE GRANT PROGRAM FUNDING. (a) Requires the health science center to actively seek and apply for any available federal funds to assist in financing the competitive grant program established under this subchapter.

(b) Authorizes the health science center to use appropriated funds from the state government and to accept gifts, donations, grants of money, and in-kind contributions from the federal government, local governments, private corporations, or other persons to assist in financing the competitive grant program.

SECTION 2. Requires the health science center to:

(1) as soon as practicable, apply for any available federal funds to assist in financing the competitive grant program under Subchapter I, Chapter 73, Education Code, as added by this Act, as required by Section 73.609, Education Code, as added by this Act;

(2) not later than December 1, 2009, submit a report to the Senate Education Committee, or its successor, and the House Public Education Committee, or its successor, regarding the implementation and status of the competitive grant program required by Subchapter I, Chapter 73, Education Code, as added by this Act;

(3) not later than September 1, 2010, establish and implement the competitive grant program required by Subchapter I, Chapter 73, Education Code, as added by this Act, and, with the assistance of the national center, publish guidelines required by Section 73.606, Education Code, as added by this Act; and

(4) not later than December 1, 2011, submit the initial annual report required by Section 73.608(b)(2), Education Code, as added by this Act.

SECTION 3. Provides that this Act does not make an appropriation. Provides that a provision of this Act that creates a new governmental program, creates a new entitlement, or imposes a new duty on a governmental entity is not mandatory during a fiscal period for which the legislature has not made a specific appropriation to implement the provision.

SECTION 4. Effective date: September 1, 2009.