

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

Senate Research Center  
83R16468 CAE-D

H.B. 1479  
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Education  
5/10/2013  
Engrossed

### **AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT**

Interested parties assert that truancy in Texas limits students' educational opportunities, increases the likelihood of students engaging in harmful behavior, and reduces the amount of funding that local school districts receive through the state school finance system. According to interested parties, efforts to address truancy in places such as Bexar County are complicated by the large number of local jurisdictions, disparate filing methods, and a high level of student mobility between school districts. In Bexar County alone, for example, more than 15 independent school districts file truancy cases using different approaches. Districts may choose to file a case with any one of six justices of the peace or with the municipal court.

H.B. 1479 addresses the lack of consistency that reportedly complicates efforts to deal with truancy in populous counties by establishing a commission in certain counties to make nonbinding recommendations for uniform truancy policies.

H.B. 1479 amends current law relating to establishing a committee in certain counties to recommend a uniform truancy policy.

### **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 Subchapter C, Chapter 25, Education Code, by adding Section 25.0916, as follows:

Sec. 25.0916. UNIFORM TRUANCY POLICIES IN CERTAIN COUNTIES. (a)  
Provides that this section applies only to a county:

(1) with a population greater than 1.5 million; and

(2) that includes at least:

(A) 15 school districts with the majority of district territory in the county; and

(B) one school district with a student enrollment of 50,000 or more and an annual dropout rate spanning grades 9-12 of at least five percent, computed in accordance with standards and definitions adopted by the National Center for Education Statistics of the United States Department of Education.

(b) Requires that a committee be established to recommend a uniform truancy policy for each school district located in the county.

(c) Requires the county judge and the mayor of the municipality in the county with the greatest population, not later than September 1, 2013, to each appoint one member to serve on the committee as a representative of each of the following:

- (1) a juvenile district court;
- (2) a municipal court;
- (3) the office of a justice of the peace;
- (4) the superintendent or designee of an independent school district;
- (5) an open-enrollment charter school;
- (6) the office of the district attorney; and
- (7) the general public.

(d) Requires the county judge, not later than September 1, 2013, to appoint one member to serve on the committee from the house of representatives who is a member of the standing legislative committee with primary jurisdiction over public education.

(e) Requires the county judge and mayor of the municipality in the county with the greatest population to both serve on the committee or appoint representatives to serve on their behalf, and jointly appoint a member of the committee to serve as the presiding officer.

(f) Requires the committee, not later than September 1, 2014, to recommend:

- (1) a uniform process for filing truancy cases with the judicial system;
- (2) uniform administrative procedures;
- (3) uniform deadlines for processing truancy cases;
- (4) effective prevention, intervention, and diversion methods to reduce truancy and referrals to a county, justice, or municipal court;
- (5) a system for tracking truancy information and sharing truancy information among school districts and open-enrollment charter schools in the county; and
- (6) any changes to statutes or state agency rules the committee determines are necessary to address truancy.

(g) Provides that compliance with the committee recommendations is voluntary.

(h) Requires the committee's presiding officer to issue a report not later than December 1, 2015, on the implementation of the recommendations and compliance with state truancy laws by a school district located in the county.

(i) Provides that this section expires January 1, 2016.

SECTION 2. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2013.