

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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S.B. 1284
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Education
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As Filed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Studies show that the first five years of a child's life is critical to learning. Many children, especially those in poverty, do not have access to books or parents who read to them. Children without sufficient exposure to language arrive at school without basic literacy skills and can struggle with reading for the rest of their lives. The "Reach Out and Read" program, also called "Little Readers," trains and supports medical providers to provide advice to parents about the importance of reading aloud at well-child exams. Reach Out and Read builds on the unique relationship between parents and medical providers to develop essential early literacy skills in young children via the existing healthcare infrastructure.

S.B. 1284 would set up the structure for institutions of higher education to offer the Reach Out and Read program to medical providers in Texas. These institutions will create guidelines for the program with the assistance of the Reach Out and Read National Center. SB 1284 will also require these institutions of higher learning to report every other year regarding the grants awarded during the two reporting years.

Support for this bill may come from Legacy Community Health System as well as the Texas Association of Business. There is no known opposition at this time.

As proposed, S.B. 1284 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 J, as follows:

SUBCHAPTER J. COMPETITIVE GRANT PROGRAM TO PROMOTE EARLY LITERACY

Sec. 73.701. DEFINITIONS. Defines "competitive grant program," "health care practitioner," "health science center," and "literacy program."

Sec. 73.702. 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 to promote early literacy through which the health science center will award grants for the implementation of literacy programs, or the expansion 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.

Sec. 73.703. LITERACY PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS. Requires a literacy program funded through a grant awarded under this subchapter to:

(1) consult and use as a guide the program model developed by the Reach Out and Read National Center, including any clinical, programmatic, and data collection requirements of that model;

(2) require that health care practitioners who participate in the literacy program 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

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

Sec. 73.704. 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 health science center in consultation with the Reach Out and Read National Center.

Sec. 73.705. LITERACY PROGRAM GUIDELINES. Requires the health science center, with the assistance of the Reach Out and Read National Center, to publish guidelines for the literacy programs funded under this subchapter. Authorizes the guidelines to follow the Reach Out and Read national program model standards and guidelines that have been tested and replicated in multiple communities.

Sec. 73.706. USE OF PROGRAM MONEY. (a) Authorizes the health science center, in addition to awarding grants under this subchapter, to use program money to administer the competitive grant program and purchase or contract to purchase discounted books for used by grant recipients.

(b) Authorizes a grant recipient to use grant money 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 programs and purchasing or contracting to purchase discounted books for use in the literacy program.

Sec. 73.707. PROGRAM EVALUATION; BIENNIAL COMMITTEE REPORTS. (a) Requires the health science center, with the assistance of the Reach Out and Read National Center, to prepare and submit a biennial report, not later than December 1 of each even-numbered year, to the senate committee on education, or its successor, and the house public education committee, or its successor, regarding the grants awarded during the preceding two state fiscal years.

(b) Requires the report required under Subsection (a) to include the number of health care practitioners who participate in the program, the number of children receiving literacy program services as a result of the program, and the amount of each grant awarded to a health care practitioner under the program.

(c) 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 program, including recipient participation in the program, and to prepare the report required by this section.

Sec. 73.708. COMPETITIVE GRANT PROGRAM FUNDING. (a) Requires the health science center to actively seek and apply for any available federal money to assist in financing the competitive grant program established under this subchapter.

(b) Authorizes the health science center to use appropriated money 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 money to assist in financing the competitive grant program under Subchapter J, Chapter 73, Education Code, as added by this Act, as required by Section 73.708, Education Code, as added by this Act; and

(2) not later than December 1, 2022, submit a report to the senate committee on education, 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 J, Chapter 73, Education Code, as added by this Act.

SECTION 3. Effective date: September 1, 2019.