

SUBJECT: Coordination of child-care and early childhood education services

COMMITTEE: Public Education — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 5 ayes — Eissler, Delisi, Hochberg, Mowery, Olivo

0 nays

4 absent — Zedler, Branch, Dutton, Patrick

SENATE VOTE: On final passage, April 23 — 28-3 (Nelson, Patrick, Williams)

WITNESSES: For — Jason Sabo, United Ways of Texas; John A. Whitcamp, Child Care Associates Pres/CEO; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Sandi Borden, Texas Elementary Principals & Supervisors Association; Ramiro Canales, Texas Association of School Administrators; Bill Carpenter, Texas Council of Administrators of Special Education; Daniel Casey, Texas School Alliance; Susan Craven, Texans Care for Children; David Duty, Texas Association of School Boards; Rebecca Flores, Houston ISD; Lindsay Gustafson, Texas Classroom Teachers Association; Kaitlin Guthrow, Texas Early Childhood Education Coalition; Tere A. Holmes, Texas Licensed Child Care Association; Glynis Lansdell, TLCCA; Elena Lincoln, Association of Texas Professional Educators-ATPE; Yesenia Monsour, San Antonio Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, The Association of Mexican American Chambers; Eloisa Pelletier, League of Women Voters; Martin Pena, South Texas Association of Schools; Patty Quinzi, Texas Federation of Teachers; Richard Sookiasian, Texas Association of Mexican American Chambers of Commerce-TAMACC; Kristine Webb, Learning Care Group)

Against — (*Registered, but did not testify*: David Fincher, Professional Early Care and Education Coalition, Texas Children's Education Group)

On — Mike Falick, Spring Branch ISD Board of Trustees; Susan Gunnewig, State Center for Early Childhood; Jamie Story, Texas Public Policy Foundation; Nicole Verver, Texas Workforce Commission; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Sasha Rasco, Department of Family and Protective Services)

**BACKGROUND:** The 78th Legislature in 2003 enacted SB 76 by Zaffirini, which required that providers of early childhood care and education coordinate to ensure, to the extent practicable, that full-day, full-year child-care services are available to meet the needs of low-income parents who are working or participating in workforce training or workforce education. It also provided for the approval of demonstration projects under which government-funded child-care services are operated in a coordinated way. To implement these projects, providers obtain waivers from existing rules and regulations as long as they do not adversely affect the health and welfare of children involved in the project.

In 2005, SB 23 by Zaffirini established a program to award grants to providers of early childhood care and education programs that, to the greatest extent practicable, provide information to parents and coordinated services to ensure that full-day, full-year child-care services are available to low-income parents who are working or participating in workforce training or workforce education.

SB 23 also created a voluntary school readiness certification system to certify the effectiveness of pre-kindergarten programs, Head Start, and Early Head Start programs, and government-subsidized child-care programs provided by nonprofit, for-profit, and faith-based entities preparing children for kindergarten. The system applies common criteria to each provider based upon the input of stakeholders, research into early childhood care and education, and recognition of the cognitive, social, and emotional development of young children.

**DIGEST:** CSSB 50 would authorize the development of school readiness integration programs. A school readiness integration program would be eligible and entitled to priority funding for pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, and Head Start grant funds. Funds could be used to create a kindergarten program, expand a pre-kindergarten program for children age three and younger otherwise eligible for free pre-kindergarten, increase income eligibility levels to not more than 200 percent of the federal poverty level for pre-kindergarten, or add a teacher's aide to existing pre-kindergarten classes.

In certifying school readiness integration projects, the State Center for Early Childhood Development (CECD) would give priority to projects involving coordinated participation of school districts, Head Start, and Early Head Start program providers, and nonprofit or for-profit entities

providing child-care services. CECD would report the effectiveness of the project, an evaluation on the level of participation, and an estimate of local, state, and federal funds spent on early childhood education services on participating children to the Legislature and affected agencies. CECD would maintain and make available a registry of qualified private entities that volunteered to participate in a school readiness integration project.

The bill would expand the school readiness certification system to consideration of the physical development of children in addition to cognitive, social, and emotional development. The certification system would raise quality standards and require that program providers seeking certification be capable of administering certain diagnosis instruments for the purpose of reporting on a child's reading development and comprehension.

Under the bill, certain child care providers would be eligible for increased reimbursement. To the extent that funds were available, eligible providers could receive enhanced reimbursement rates for services provided to children younger than age six who were participating in a school readiness integration project, the Texas Rising Star certification program, or the school readiness certification system.

The bill would establish the training modules that would allow child care providers to connect with training resources. The module would be developed and maintained in accordance with core knowledge and skills identified by early childhood education experts and include a post-assessment that indicated an acceptable level of learning by the employee.

In efforts to promote the professional development of early childhood educators, the bill would establish the Texas Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education Career Development. The council would coordinate its efforts with the Texas Head Start State Collaboration Office. Advisory membership of the Council would include representatives from the Texas Education Agency, Texas Workforce Commission, Office of Early Childhood Coordination, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, Department of Family and Protective Services, State Center for Early Childhood Development, Texas Head Start State Collaboration Office, Texas Cooperative Extension, and other statewide early childhood associations or organizations designated by the Texas Education Agency. The Council, in conjunction with the Texas Education Agency, would manage early childhood education partnership projects and develop any

criteria needed for determining the effectiveness and performance of those partnerships. The Texas Education Agency would provide staff assistance as necessary to enable the council to perform all duties and responsibilities.

Through the early childhood education partnership projects, child care professionals would be encouraged in professional development. This initiative would allow child care professionals to obtain training by way of college and university credit and/or professional certifications. Participating professionals would be required to complete 48 hours of training, the equivalent of three to four college or university semester credit hours, within the first 18 months of participation.

Qualified partnership projects would pay for qualified expenses for each early childhood education professional who participated in the project, pursued a higher education degree, and remained in the field of early childhood education for two years. Qualified expenses could include tuition, books, and other instruction-related expenses.

No later than December 1, 2010, the council would be required to submit a report to the Legislature that evaluated the effectiveness of the changes in law facilitated by the bill. The report would specifically address any effect on the recruitment, retention, and quality of early childhood education providers and any effect on associated student learning outcomes.

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, 2007.

**SUPPORTERS  
SAY:**

CSSB 50 would build on the progress made by SB 76 in 2003 and SB 23 in 2005 that has led to greater collaboration and integration of child-care and early childhood education services. Countless studies have demonstrated the positive cognitive and social outcomes for children associated with these services, and CSSB 50 would enhance parental awareness of quality service providers and facilitate more efficient application of resources.

The expansion of the voluntary school readiness certification system would enhance accountability because an entity would include scientifically based criteria on both the mental and physical development of a child. A child care provider who obtains certification provides parents

a way to ensure that their child receives the highest quality of care. The certification system serves as a competitive tool that harnesses the market force of investments by parents and leads to better service by all providers through their efforts to stay competitive.

The bill would increase the return that the state, the federal government, and parents receive d on their investment in children through allowing funding streams to work together to ensure that children were school-ready. School readiness integration projects would offer a proven foundation for providers to understand their individual responsibilities in integrated systems and ensure they were taking advantage of all the mechanisms by which integration could benefit children. The bill would ensure that staff skills and child outcomes were improved and that the knowledge gained from these projects could be imparted for use in other areas.

Establishment of the Texas Advisory Committee on Early Care and Education Center would improve the recruitment and retention of quality early childhood education professionals. Currently, most child care workers do not even hold an associate degree. A working knowledge of how children grow and develop is essential for adults who interact with and teach children. Child care providers, teachers, parents, and children all would benefit from encouragement of professional development.

OPPONENTS  
SAY:

While CSSB 50 has laudable goals of increasing school readiness, quality of child care, and improving the recruitment and retention of childhood educators, the bill also would expand or create other programs with no evidence to justify the use of taxpayer dollars. There are dozens, if not hundreds, of existing private programs that provide early childhood educator training. There are no data indicating these program options are insufficient. The bill would ask taxpayers to fund government-provided training for which there is no evident need.

Also, the bill would create the Texas Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education Career Development, which would encourage early childhood educators to seek further training by subsidizing their higher education. It is not the duty of the government to decide which portions of the labor force should be subsidized by taxpayers. The market should determine salaries and qualifications for early childhood educators, like all other professions. Increased professionalism would put demands on increasing compensation for early childhood educators. Taxpayers would

not only be forced to bear the cost of the educational subsidies for child care providers, but also face higher costs for child care.

The Texas Education Agency reports that of the kindergartners who took a reading assessment during the 2004-2005 school year, 83 percent were reading at grade level. While there is room for improvement, the results indicate that a large-scale expansion of the public pre-kindergarten bureaucracy is unnecessary.

**NOTES:**

According to the fiscal note, CSSB 50 would cost \$3,012,400 in fiscal 2008-09, with \$1.7 million in fiscal 2008 and \$1.2 million in fiscal 2009. Estimates include the addition of two FTEs.

Data collection for raw scores on the reading diagnostic assessment would cost approximately \$1 per child or \$350,000 for participating 3-5 year olds. An additional \$200,000 would be required to contract with regional education service centers to resolve data matching errors and to conduct data quality activities.

To develop an interactive Internet training module for child care workers, the Department of Family and Protective Services estimates that a one-time technology development expense and the addition of 2 FTEs for support and content oversight would cost \$194, 209 in fiscal 2008 and \$114, 937 thereafter.

The House committee substitute provides that child care providers participating in school ready integration projects would acknowledge in the memorandum of understanding establishing the project that the State Center for Early Childhood Education Development had determined that there was a need for additional pre-kindergarten classrooms for three- and four-year-old children based on a survey administered by the Center.

The Senate version provides that eligible providers wishing to use grant funds to expand income eligibility levels could not exceed 300 percent of the federal poverty level for pre-kindergarten programs. The House substitute change d the eligibility to not more than 200 percent of the federal poverty level.

The substitute added language to require the CECD to give priority when certifying school readiness projects to those projects involving coordinated participation of school districts, Head Start and Early Head Start program

providers, and nonprofit or for-profit entities providing child-care services. The substitute also added that the CECD would have to report an estimate of the total amount of federal, state, and local funds spent on projects providing early childhood education services.

The substitute provides that family home care providers that would provide training for the online training modules would need to be registered with the Department of Family and Protective Services, if applicable, and could only provide training where the trainer or trainee was employed. The substitute also added that the council would have to provide a report to the Legislature no later than December 1, 2010.