

SUBJECT: Changing certain eligibility requirements for teaching certificates

COMMITTEE: Public Education — favorable, without amendment

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

0 nays

1 absent — Allen

WITNESSES: For — (*Registered, but did not testify:* Tim Miller, Raise Your Hand Texas; Dwight Harris, Texas American Federation of Teachers; Barry Haenisch, Texas Association of Community Schools; Casey McCreary, Texas Association of School Administrators; Grover Campbell, Texas Association of School Boards; Mark Terry, Texas Elementary Principals and Supervisors Association; Dee Carney, Texas School Alliance)

Against — David Anthony

On — Stacey Edmonson, Texas Association of Colleges of Teacher Education; (*Registered, but did not testify:* Glenda Ballard, St. Edward's University; Ryan Franklin, Texas Education Agency; Lisa Dawn-Fisher, Texas State Teachers Association; Robert McPherson, University of Houston)

BACKGROUND: Under Education Code sec. 21.050, individuals applying for a teaching certificate for which a bachelor's degree is required must possess a bachelor's degree with an academic major or interdisciplinary academic major other than education that is related to the state's required curriculum.

The State Board for Educator Certification is prohibited from requiring more than 18 semester credit hours of education courses at the baccalaureate level for the granting of a teaching certificate.

DIGEST: HB 3217 would allow an applicant for a teaching certificate for which the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) required a bachelor's degree to hold a bachelor's degree with an academic major of education.

The bill also would remove the cap on baccalaureate-level education course semester credit hours that SBEC could require for a teaching certificate. SBEC would be required to include a minimum number of semester credit hours of field-based experience or internship to be included in the credit hours needed for certification.

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, 2019.

SUPPORTERS SAY: HB 3217 would help teachers adequately prepare for complex classroom environments by allowing students who wanted to become teachers to take more baccalaureate-level education courses or major in education. This would increase teachers' pedagogical skills and encourage retention in the profession.

Current law does not allow educator preparation programs (EPPs) the flexibility to adequately cover pedagogy, even as teachers face more complex school environments that require additional preparation and knowledge on topics such as school violence, mental health, and youth suicide. By removing the cap on baccalaureate-level education courses that could count for a teacher certification, the bill would help EPPs better train and prepare teachers. The bill would not affect content standards for teachers, as EPPs would continue to be held accountable for subject-matter expertise through content certification exams.

By allowing higher education institutions to offer an education degree, HB 3217 would improve educator recruitment efforts and help support the profession. Additionally, the bill could help increase retention of teachers by more adequately preparing them to face the challenges of the modern classroom.

OPPONENTS
SAY:

HB 3217 would not adequately prepare educators and would not increase support for the teaching profession.

HB 3217 would require a minimum number of field-based or internship credit hours for individuals applying for a teaching certification, but would not specify a guaranteed minimum number. This ambiguity could cause pedagogical courses to be increased at the expense of content courses currently required of educators in the state. Teachers should be subject-matter experts in order for students to be successful in high-stakes testing and content-heavy environments, and allowing or encouraging future teachers to take too many pedagogy courses could inhibit their ability to gain needed expertise. Rather than increase the number of education credit hours and internship hours that could be counted toward a teacher certification, the bill should review and improve existing pedagogical curriculums in the state.

Allowing teachers to hold bachelor's degrees in education would not support or legitimize the teaching profession. Instead, teachers should be supported through adequate preparation, continuing and effective professional development, and increased pay.