

By: Cunningham

H.B. No. 1662

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

1 AN ACT

2 relating to a grant program for public schools and regional
3 education service centers to provide services related to educating
4 students with autism.

5 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

6 SECTION 1. Subchapter A, Chapter 29, Education Code, is
7 amended by adding Section 29.026 to read as follows:

8 Sec. 29.026. GRANT PROGRAM PROVIDING SERVICES TO STUDENTS
9 WITH AUTISM. (a) The commissioner shall establish a program to
10 award grants to:

11 (1) school districts and open-enrollment charter
12 schools that provide innovative services to students with autism;
13 and

14 (2) regional education service centers that provide
15 specialized training on evidence-based practices to classroom
16 teachers who teach students with autism.

17 (b) A school district or open-enrollment charter school is
18 eligible for a grant under Subsection (a)(1) if the district or
19 school offers a program that incorporates:

20 (1) evidence-based and research-based design;

21 (2) the use of empirical data on student achievement
22 and improvement;

23 (3) parental support and collaboration;

24 (4) the use of technology;

- 1 (5) professional development;
- 2 (6) meaningful inclusion; and
- 3 (7) the ability to replicate the program for students
- 4 statewide.

5 (c) A regional education service center is eligible for a
6 grant under Subsection (a)(2) if the center provides specialized
7 training that incorporates:

- 8 (1) evidence-based and research-based design;
- 9 (2) de-escalation and positive behavioral
- 10 interventions and supports;
- 11 (3) the use of empirical data on student achievement
- 12 and improvement;
- 13 (4) ongoing professional development;
- 14 (5) ongoing coaching services; and
- 15 (6) the ability to replicate the training statewide.

16 (d) A school district or open-enrollment charter school
17 that receives a grant under this section may not:

- 18 (1) charge a fee for the program, other than those
- 19 authorized by law for students in public schools;
- 20 (2) require a parent to enroll a child in the program;
- 21 (3) allow an admission, review, and dismissal
- 22 committee to place a student in the program without the written
- 23 consent of the student's parent or guardian; or
- 24 (4) continue the placement of a student in the program
- 25 after the student's parent or guardian revokes consent, in writing,
- 26 to the student's placement in the program.

27 (e) A program under Subsection (a)(1) may:

1 (1) alter the length of the school day or school year
2 or the number of minutes of instruction received by students;

3 (2) coordinate services with private or
4 community-based providers;

5 (3) allow the participation of students without
6 disabilities or with other disabilities, if that participation is
7 consistent with requirements applicable to students with autism for
8 placement in the least restrictive environment under 34 C.F.R.
9 Section 300.114; and

10 (4) adopt staff qualifications and staff to student
11 ratios that differ from the applicable requirements of this title.

12 (f) The commissioner shall create an external panel of
13 stakeholders, including parents of students with disabilities, to
14 provide assistance in the selection of applications for the award
15 of grants under this section.

16 (g) The commissioner may award not more than 10 grants under
17 Subsection (a)(1). In selecting programs to receive a grant under
18 that subsection, the commissioner shall prioritize programs that
19 are collaborations between multiple school districts, multiple
20 charter schools, or school districts and charter schools. The
21 selected programs must reflect the diversity of this state.

22 (h) A grant award under Subsection (a)(1) may not exceed
23 \$1 million in a state fiscal biennium.

24 (i) The commissioner shall use at least half of the money
25 appropriated for grants under this section to award grants under
26 Subsection (a)(2).

27 (j) A grant awarded to a school district or open-enrollment

1 charter school under this section is in addition to the Foundation
2 School Program money that the district or charter school is
3 otherwise entitled to receive. A grant awarded under this section
4 may not come out of Foundation School Program money.

5 (k) The commissioner and any program selected under this
6 section may accept gifts, grants, and donations from any public or
7 private source, person, or group to implement and administer the
8 program. The commissioner and any program selected under this
9 section may not require any financial contribution from parents to
10 implement and administer the program.

11 (l) The commissioner shall adopt rules to implement this
12 section, including rules establishing an application and selection
13 process for awarding grants.

14 (m) Not later than December 31, 2030, the commissioner shall
15 submit to the legislature a report on the grant program under this
16 section. The report must include:

17 (1) recommendations for statutory or funding changes
18 necessary to implement successful innovations in the education of
19 students with autism; and

20 (2) data on the academic and functional achievements
21 of students enrolled in a program that received a grant under this
22 section.

23 (n) This section expires September 1, 2031.

24 SECTION 2. This Act applies beginning with the 2025-2026
25 school year.

26 SECTION 3. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives
27 a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as

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1 provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this
2 Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this
3 Act takes effect September 1, 2025.