

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

H.B. 3418  
By: Guillen  
Public Education  
Committee Report (Unamended)

### **BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE**

Texas high schools face a major challenge in their efforts to retain students who are at risk of dropping out of school. If these at-risk students drop out of school, the cost to society is enormous, as they often are unable to secure gainful employment, experience increased incarceration rates, and cannot achieve their full potential as productive citizens of this State.

This bill is intended to help address the challenge of keeping these students in school. As more fully explained in the ANALYSIS section below, this bill creates a pilot program of grants to fund student club activities for students at risk of dropping out of school

### **RULEMAKING AUTHORITY**

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

### **ANALYSIS**

Note: Unless otherwise specified, statutory references in this Bill Analysis are to the Education Code.

The bill adds a new section to the Education Code relating to grants for student clubs. The bill directs the Commissioner of Education (commissioner) to administer a pilot program to provide grants to school districts to fund student club activities for students at risk of dropping out of school. From funds appropriated for purposes of this Subchapter C of Chapter 29, the commissioner shall spend an amount not to exceed \$5 million in any state fiscal biennium on the program.

The bill provides that the commissioner may award a grant in an amount not to exceed \$5,000 in a school year to a school district on behalf of a student club at a district high school campus at which at least 60 percent of students are identified as students at risk of dropping out of school. To be eligible for a grant, the student club and the club's sponsor must be sanctioned by the campus and district. A grant awarded under this program must be matched by other state, federal, or local funds, including donations, in an amount equal to the amount of the grant. A district shall seek donations or sponsorships from local businesses or community organizations to raise the matching funds. The commissioner may award a grant on behalf of more than one student club at a campus in the same academic year.

The bill provides that the commissioner shall establish application criteria for receipt of such a grant. The criteria must require an applicant for a grant to provide a description of the student club, a statement of the student club's goals, intent, and activities, a statement of the source of funds to be used to match the grant, a budget for the student club, a statement showing that the student club's finances are sustainable, and any other information the commissioner requires.

The bill provides that the commissioner shall establish a grant agreement to be signed by the sponsor of a student club receiving a grant and another authorized school district officer. The agreement must require the district and the student club to participate in an evaluation, as determined by the commissioner, of the club's program and the program's effect on student achievement and dropout rates.

The bill provides that a student club may use funds awarded under this pilot program to support academic or co-curricular club activities, other than athletics, in which at least 50 percent of the participating students have been identified as students at risk of dropping out of school. A student club may use funds for materials, sponsor stipends, and other needs that directly support the club's activities. A student club must use the entire amount of the grant to directly fund the club's activities described in the application. A student club may not use more than 50 percent of a grant to pay sponsor stipends.

The bill provides that, at the end of the school year, a student club that receives a grant must submit a report to the board of trustees of the school district summarizing the club's activities and the extent to which the club met the club's goals and achieved the club's intent.

**EFFECTIVE DATE**

September 1, 2007.