

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

C.S.H.B. 4245  
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Agriculture & Livestock  
Committee Report (Substituted)

### **BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE**

Texas needs additional human capital to support economic development in rural areas of the state. Our rural school districts must collaborate with higher education business partners to develop workforce training, and to produce skilled workers for rural industry.

C.S.H.B. 4245 proposes that the Texas Department of Agriculture administer a pilot grant program for rural areas, defined as cities with fewer than 50,000 people and counties with fewer than 100,000. Under the program, local workforce development boards will apply for grants to develop partnerships with local school districts, community colleges, public technical institutions, four-year institutions of higher education, and business and industry. Students in the pilot program will be able to simultaneously complete their high school education and 60 hours of college education in addition to achieving certification in several career areas. The bill limits the department to issuing no more than four grants per fiscal biennium.

### **RULEMAKING AUTHORITY**

It is the committee's opinion that rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the commissioner of agriculture in SECTION 1 of this bill.

### **ANALYSIS**

C.S.H.B. 4245 amends the Agriculture Code to require the commissioner of agriculture by rule, subject to available funds, to develop a rural workforce investment pilot program to issue grants for developing partnerships in rural areas among school districts, public junior colleges, general academic teaching institutions, public technical institutes, and business and industry to provide greater access to career and technical education and industry certification to high school students in those areas. The bill defines "rural area" to mean a county with a population of less than 100,000, or a municipality with a population of less than 50,000. The bill requires the Department of Agriculture (TDA) to coordinate with the Texas Workforce Commission, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, and the Texas Education Agency in developing the pilot program.

C.S.H.B. 4245 provides that students participating in the pilot program may receive at least 60 hours of college credit before high school graduation.

C.S.H.B. 4245 permits a local workforce development board to apply to participate in the pilot program if the board serves a rural area of Texas and meets any other qualifications prescribed by the commissioner of agriculture. The bill requires an applicant, in order to receive a grant, to commit public or private funds matching the grant in a percentage set by the commissioner, based on the demonstrated economic capacity of the community served by the program to raise matching funds. The bill limits TDA to issuing no more than four rural workforce investment program grants in each state fiscal biennium.

C.S.H.B. 4245 defines "general academic teaching institution," "public junior college," and "public technical institute" by reference to provisions of the Education Code.

### **EFFECTIVE DATE**

On passage, or, if the act does not receive the necessary vote, the act takes effect September 1, 2009.

### **COMPARISON OF ORIGINAL AND SUBSTITUTE**

C.S.H.B. 4245 differs from the original by adding public technical institutes as potential participants in the rural workforce investment pilot program, and by adding a definition of public technical institute. The substitute adds a specification that the pilot program be developed to issue grants for developing partnerships in rural areas, whereas the original refers only to developing partnerships. The substitute adds a provision not in the original limiting the Department of Agriculture to issuing no more than four rural workforce investment grants in each state fiscal biennium.