

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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S.B. 276
By: Campbell
Education
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As Filed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Taxpayer savings grants will allow parents to meet the educational needs of their child. Many children thrive in school districts, but some do not. A grant would allow money to follow the child, which would help all children, save taxpayers billions of dollars, benefit Texas teachers, and improve public schools.

Taxpayer savings grants allow eligible school-age children to qualify for a grant equal to the lesser of the tuition paid or 60 percent of what the state spends per student on annual maintenance and operations. While that amount varies depending on the school district, the statewide average is approximately \$5,100 a year. This is more than enough to cover the average tuition costs at most parochial elementary schools in Texas. The remaining 40 percent would be returned to the state, thus incurring a savings.

As proposed, S.B. 276 amends current law relating to state savings and government efficiency achieved through a taxpayer savings grant program administered by the comptroller of public accounts of the State of Texas.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the comptroller of public accounts of the State of Texas in SECTION 3 of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Section 42.253, Education Code, by adding Subsection (b-1), as follows:

(b-1) Requires the commissioner of education (commissioner), notwithstanding Subsection (b) (relating to the determination of funds by the commissioner), to adjust enrollment estimates and entitlement for each school district for each school year based on information provided by the comptroller of public accounts of the State of Texas (comptroller) under Section 42.501(f). Provides that this subsection expires September 1, 2020.

SECTION 2. Amends Chapter 42, Education Code, by adding Subchapter J, as follows:

SUBCHAPTER J. TAXPAYER SAVINGS GRANTS

Sec. 42.501. TAXPAYER SAVINGS GRANT PROGRAM. (a) Defines "eligible student."

(b) Authorizes a parent or legal guardian of an eligible student who agrees to accept reimbursement in an amount that is less than the state average maintenance and operations expenditures per student to receive reimbursement from the state for the tuition paid for the enrollment of the eligible student at a private school in an amount that is the lesser of the tuition paid or 60 percent of the state average maintenance and operations expenditures per student.

(c) Prohibits money from the available school fund and federal funds from being used for reimbursement under this section.

(d) Prohibits a private school voluntarily selected by a parent for the parent's child to attend, with or without governmental assistance, from being required to comply with any state law or rule governing the school's educational program that was not in effect on January 1, 2015.

(e) Requires the comptroller to administer the program and provide reimbursement to a parent or legal guardian of an eligible student as authorized by this section.

(f) Requires the comptroller, not later than October 1 of each year, to notify the commissioner and the Legislative Budget Board (LBB) of the number of eligible students likely to participate in the program, disaggregated by the school district or open-enrollment charter school the eligible students would otherwise attend. Requires the comptroller, not later than March 1 of each year, to provide final information to the commissioner and LBB regarding the number of students participating in the program, disaggregated in the same manner as the initial information.

SECTION 3. Requires the comptroller, as soon as practicable, but not later than October 15, 2015, in coordination with the commissioner, to adopt rules to implement the Taxpayer Savings Grant Program under Section 42.501, Education Code, as added by this Act, including rules to prevent fraud in financial transactions under the program and to determine the net savings resulting from implementation of the program. Requires the rules to require reconciliation of payments for all grants within the same fiscal year or within the first month following the end of the fiscal year.

SECTION 4. Effective date: September 1, 2015.