

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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C.S.S.B. 1216
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Education
5/1/2015
Committee Report (Substituted)

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

C.S.S.B. 1216 places the Harris County Department of Education (HCDE) under sunset review.

Prior to the establishment of independent school districts, a majority of Texans were educated via "county schools." These schools were the typical one room school houses and were overseen by a county school superintendent and county school board. As transportation improved and Texas became less rural, independent school districts were created and slowly the need for a county school board decreased. All Harris County students were moved to independent school districts by 1966, but Harris County Trustees (later changing its name to the Harris County Department of Education) did not disband as other boards did across Texas. HCDE and the Dallas County Schools are the only remaining county school districts in Texas. In 1978, the State of Texas stopped funding county school trustees. Fifty-six percent of HCDE is being funded by fees for services, and HCDE is allowed to collect a local property tax, known as an equalization tax. Additionally, there is overlap of services provided between Region 4 Education Service Center (Region 4) and HCDE. Region 4 has a much larger span, providing service to 50 traditional school districts and 45 charter school districts in a seven-county area. According to their website, "HCDE supports the educational needs of 25 school districts in Harris County."

Putting HCDE under sunset review helps to determine if it is a necessary entity.

C.S.S.B. 1216 amends current law relating to providing for the review of certain county departments of education by the Sunset Advisory Commission.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. (a) Provides that the county department of education in a county with a population of 3.3 million or more according to the most recent federal decennial census is subject to review under Chapter 325 (Sunset Law), Government Code (Texas Sunset Act), as if the department were a state agency, but the department may not be abolished under that chapter. Requires that the review be conducted as if the department were scheduled to be abolished September 1, 2017.

(b) Requires that the review assess the department's governance, management, and operating structure, and the department's compliance with legislative requirements.

(c) Requires the department to pay the cost incurred by the Sunset Advisory Commission in performing a review of the department under this section. Requires the Sunset Advisory Commission to determine the cost, and the requires the department to pay the amount promptly on receipt of a statement from the Sunset Advisory Commission detailing the cost.

SECTION 2. Effective date: September 1, 2015.