

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 971
By: Giddings
Higher Education
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Informed observers report that Texas is in need of more qualified early childhood education teachers. H.B. 971 seeks to provide for more such teachers by providing for the authorization for certain public junior colleges to offer early childhood education baccalaureate degree programs.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE IMPACT

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly create a criminal offense, increase the punishment for an existing criminal offense or category of offenses, or change the eligibility of a person for community supervision, parole, or mandatory supervision.

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

H.B. 971 amends the Education Code to require the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to authorize a baccalaureate degree program in early childhood education at each public junior college located in a county with a population of 2.2 million or more and adjacent to a county with a population of more than 600,000 if the county in which the public junior college is located has a demonstrated initial need for at least 2,400 early childhood educators based on the number of unserved children eligible for public early childhood education, assuming, only for purposes of calculating the need, a student to teacher ratio of 12 to 1; if the degree program curriculum is approved by the independent school districts located in the county that collectively represent at least 51 percent of the student population enrolled in kindergarten through 12th grade; and if a regional public university located in the county in which the public junior college is located or an immediately adjacent county is unable to fulfill certain specified conditions before certain deadlines established by the bill.

H.B. 971 prohibits an early childhood baccalaureate degree program from being authorized by the State Board for Educator Certification for a certification field above the third grade level and prohibits the coordinating board from subsequently terminating authorization to offer an early childhood baccalaureate degree program on the ground that implementation of the degree program reduces the workforce need to a level that is below the minimal threshold of 2,400 early childhood educators. The bill limits the funding of such a degree program to a public junior college's proportionate share of applicable state appropriations, local funds, and private sources and expressly does not require the legislature to appropriate state funds to support a degree program.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2017.