

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

C.S.S.B. 610
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Education
4/20/2017
Committee Report (Substituted)

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Originally established in 2007, the Texas Virtual School Network (TxVSN) offers full time virtual instruction for students in grades three through 12. Of the 24 states that currently offer full-time virtual school programs, Texas is the only one to exclude kindergarten through second grade. S.B. 610 expands the current TxVSN, allowing students in kindergarten through second grade to attend as well.

The TxVSN Online Schools program is offered through Texas Education Agency-accredited public schools and open-enrollment charter schools, meaning virtual school students are classified as public school students and all courses meet the state curriculum standards. All instruction is virtual and provided by certified teachers.

Excluding kindergarten through second grade limits educational opportunities and creates hardships for students and their families. For those students who excel in this type of educational environment, waiting three years to enroll in virtual school can be harmful to academic success, potentially leading to that student falling behind. Parents with older children enrolled in the TxVSN are also forced to find a traditional brick and mortar school for their younger children. Families choose virtual school for a variety of reasons, and S.B. 610 benefits students and parents by expanding public school education choice and allowing parents of students of all ages to choose an education platform that works best for them. (Original Author's / Sponsor's Statement of Intent)

C.S.S.B. 610 amends current law relating to the state virtual school network.

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. Amends Section 30A.101(c), Education Code, as follows:

(c) Provides that a nonprofit entity, private entity, or corporation is eligible to act as a course provider under this chapter (State Virtual School Network) only if the nonprofit entity, private entity, or corporation complies with all applicable federal and state law prohibiting discrimination, demonstrates financial solvency, and provides evidence of prior successful experience offering online courses to kindergarten or elementary, middle, or high school students, with demonstrated student success in course completion and performance, as determined by the commissioner of education (commissioner).

SECTION 2. Amends Section 30A.104(a), Education Code, as follows:

(a) Requires that a course offered through the state virtual school network be aligned with the essential knowledge and skills identified under Section 28.002(c) (relating to the identification of essential knowledge and skills of each subject) for a grade level at or above kindergarten, rather than at or above grade level three.

SECTION 3. Amends Section 30A.151(f), Education Code, by changing a reference to grade level three to kindergarten.

SECTION 4. Provides that this Act applies beginning with the 2017-2018 school year.

SECTION 5. Provides that this Act takes effect only if a specific appropriation for the implementation of the Act is provided in a general appropriations act of the 85th Legislature.

SECTION 6. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2017.