

By: White

H.B. No. 553

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

1
2 relating to the creation of a task force to identify opportunities
3 for academic credit and industry recognition for inmates of the
4 Texas Department of Criminal Justice.

5 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

6 SECTION 1. Chapter 19, Education Code, is amended by adding
7 Section 19.012 to read as follows:

8 Sec. 19.012. TASK FORCE ON ACADEMIC CREDIT AND INDUSTRY
9 RECOGNITION. (a) The Windham School District, in consultation
10 with the department, shall establish a task force to review the work
11 or other productive activities in which persons confined or
12 imprisoned in the department engage.

13 (b) The task force is composed of the following seven
14 members:

15 (1) two representatives of the department designated
16 by the executive director of the department;

17 (2) one representative of the district designated by
18 the superintendent of the district;

19 (3) one representative of the Texas Higher Education
20 Coordinating Board designated by the commissioner of higher
21 education;

22 (4) one representative of the Texas Workforce
23 Commission designated by the executive director of the commission;

24 (5) one representative of a private vendor operating a

1 correctional facility under a contract with the department,
2 appointed by the governor; and

3 (6) one representative of a public junior college, as
4 defined by Section 61.003, appointed by the governor.

5 (c) The governor shall designate a member of the task force
6 to serve as presiding officer.

7 (d) A vacancy on the task force shall be filled in the same
8 manner as the initial appointment.

9 (e) A member of the task force may not receive compensation
10 for service on the task force, but is entitled to reimbursement for
11 actual and necessary expenses incurred in performing task force
12 duties.

13 (f) The task force may accept gifts and grants from any
14 source to be used to carry out a function of the task force.

15 (g) The task force shall meet at least quarterly at the call
16 of the presiding officer and at other times as determined by the
17 presiding officer.

18 (h) The task force shall:

19 (1) conduct an ongoing comprehensive review of the
20 work or other productive activities in which persons confined or
21 imprisoned in the department engage; and

22 (2) identify opportunities for the award of high
23 school credit, college credit, or joint high school and college
24 credit, or the award of an industry-recognized credential or
25 certificate, for engaging in that work or activity.

26 (i) The district, in consultation with the department, the
27 Texas Education Agency, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating

1 Board, and the Texas Workforce Commission, shall for any type of
2 work or productive activity for which an opportunity is identified
3 under Subsection (h), determine the actions necessary for obtaining
4 the award of the applicable academic credit or industry
5 recognition.

6 (j) Not less than once every four years, the task force
7 shall submit to the governor, the lieutenant governor, the speaker
8 of the house of representatives, and the standing committees of the
9 legislature having jurisdiction over the department a report that
10 summarizes the review conducted under Subsection (h) and the
11 district's actions with regard to obtaining the award of academic
12 credit or industry recognition under Subsection (i). The district
13 shall provide the task force with any information necessary to
14 complete the report.

15 (k) Chapter 2110, Government Code, does not apply to the
16 task force established under this section.

17 (l) The task force shall submit the first report required
18 under Subsection (j) not later than December 31, 2020. This
19 subsection expires February 1, 2021.

20 SECTION 2. Not later than December 1, 2017, the executive
21 director of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, the
22 superintendent of the Windham School District, the commissioner of
23 higher education, the executive director of the Texas Workforce
24 Commission, and the governor shall appoint members to the task
25 force established by Section 19.012, Education Code, as added by
26 this Act, in the manner required by Subsection (b) of that section.

27 SECTION 3. This Act takes effect September 1, 2017.