

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

H.B. 548
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Education
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Engrossed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Unjustified absenteeism, or truancy, not only disrupts a student's learning, but also may indicate other issues in a student's life, or be an early warning sign of delinquent or other harmful activity. Truancy rates vary across the state, and without accurate data it is not possible to match intervention programs to the severity of the problem in each school. A recent truancy reform bill, H.B. 2398 (84R), removed criminal sanctions on students for skipping school, but also inadvertently terminated TEA's mandate to collect truancy data and required the agency to expunge all reports on record. The authors, Rep. White and Sen. Whitmire, and several stakeholders confirmed this was not the bill's intention.

H.B. 548 would reinstate the requirement that TEA gather and report grade-level data on truancy for public schools in Texas, correcting an unintended interruption in this process. Using this data, schools will be better able to track their students in need of additional interventions to remain in school, and funding allocations can be calibrated to need.

H.B. 548 amends current law relating to reporting certain truancy information through the Public Education Information Management System.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the commissioner of education in SECTION 1 (Section 42.006, Education Code) of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Section 42.006, Education Code, by adding Subsection (a-6), as follows:

(a-6) Requires the commissioner of education (commissioner) by rule to require each school district and open-enrollment charter school to report through the Public Education Information Management System information disaggregated by campus and grade regarding:

(1) the number of children who are required to attend school under Section 25.085 (Compulsory School Attendance), are not exempted under Section 25.086 (Exemptions), and fail to attend school without excuse for 10 or more days or parts of days within a six-month period in the same school year;

(2) the number of students for whom the district initiates a truancy prevention measure under Section 25.0915(a-4) (relating to the requirement of the school district to initiate truancy prevention measures on the student, if a student fails to attend school without excuse on three or more days or parts of days within a four-week period but does not fail to attend school for a certain time); and

(3) the number of parents of students against whom an attendance officer or other appropriate school official has filed a complaint under Section 25.093 (Parent Contributing to Nonattendance).

SECTION 2. Requires the commissioner, not later than January 1, 2020, to adopt rules required by Section 42.006(a-6), Education Code, as added by this Act.

SECTION 3. Effective date: September 1, 2019.