

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

Senate Research Center

S.B. 179  
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Education  
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Enrolled

### **AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT**

The school environment has become increasingly complex, with more academic opportunities and challenges than ever before. Crises in recent years, from school shootings to natural disasters to this past year's pandemic have only worsened these pressures. Unfortunately, when the guidance and support of school counselors is needed more than ever, counselors find a significant portion of their day consumed by coordinating and overseeing standardized testing, along with other non-counseling duties. Without the attention and support of their counselors, the academic performance and mental health of Texas students will suffer.

S.B. 179 restores the balance of academic guidance, emotional support, and other administrative tasks in the counselor's workload by requiring that school counselors spend at least 80 percent of their time performing statutorily-defined counseling duties. This will ensure that school counselors have ample time to devote to the academic and emotional needs of the students under their care. To ensure the staffing needs of smaller districts can be met, the bill allows for a broad exemption that any school board can exercise as long as they provide certain information about additional non-counseling duties. With S.B. 179, school counselors will be able to devote the necessary time to steering Texas students toward bright futures.

S.B. 179 amends current law relating to the use of public school counselors' work time.

### **RULEMAKING AUTHORITY**

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the commissioner of education in SECTION 1 (Section 33.006, Education Code) of this bill.

### **SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS**

SECTION 1. Amends Section 33.006, Education Code, by adding Subsections (d), (e), (f), (g), and (h), as follows:

(d) Requires the board of trustees of each school district, except as provided by Subsection (e), to adopt a policy that requires a school counselor to spend at least 80 percent of the school counselor's total work time on duties that are components of a counseling program developed under Section 33.005 (Comprehensive School Counseling Programs). Provides that, for purposes of this subsection, time spent in administering assessment instruments or providing other assistance in connection with assessment instruments, except time spent in interpreting data from assessment instruments, is not considered time spent on counseling. Requires each school in the district to implement the policy. Requires that a copy of the policy be maintained in the office of each school in the district and made available on request during regular school hours to district employees, parents of district students, and the public.

(e) Requires that, if the board of trustees of a school district determines that, because of staffing needs in the district or at a school in the district, a school counselor is required to spend less than 80 percent of the school counselor's total work time on duties that are components of a counseling program developed under Section 33.005, the policy adopted under Subsection (d):

- (1) include the reasons why the counselor needs to spend less than 80 percent of the counselor's work time on duties that are components of the counseling program;
- (2) list the duties the counselor is expected to perform that are not components of the counseling program; and
- (3) set the percentage of work time that the counselor is required to spend on components of the counseling program.

(f) Prohibits a school district from including a provision in an employment contract with a school counselor under Chapter 21 (Educators) that conflicts with the policy required by Subsection (d) or, except as provided by Subsection (g), has the effect of authorizing a school principal or school district superintendent to require a school counselor to generally perform duties that are not primarily related to a counseling function.

(g) Prohibits a school district to which Subsection (e) applies from including a provision in an employment contract under Chapter 21 with an affected school counselor that has the effect of requiring the counselor to generally perform a duty that is not primarily related to a counseling function unless the duty is specified in the district's policy under Subsection (e)(2).

(h) Requires each school district to annually assess the district's compliance with the policy adopted under Subsection (d) and, on request by the commissioner of education (commissioner), to provide a written copy of the assessment to the Texas Education Agency (TEA) on or before the date specified by the commissioner. Requires the commissioner to adopt rules to implement this subsection.

SECTION 2. Amends Section 7.028(a), Education Code, to include Section 33.006(h) among certain exceptions to TEA's authority to monitor compliance with requirements applicable to certain processes or programs.

SECTION 3. (a) Requires each school district to implement a policy adopted under Section 33.006(d), Education Code, as added by this Act, beginning with the 2021-2022 school year.

(b) Makes application of Sections 33.006(f) and (g), Education Code, as added by this Act, prospective.

(c) Provides that Section 7.028(a), Education Code, as amended by this Act, and Section 33.006(h), Education Code, as added by this Act, apply beginning with the 2021-2022 school year.

SECTION 4. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2021.