

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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S.B. 971
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As Filed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

The existing process for filling subsidized child care slots results in parents and primary caregivers waiting for excessive periods for much-needed affordable child care. This issue is particularly pressing because of the COVID-19 pandemic, as many child care providers face permanent closure due to lost revenue.

Currently, local workforce boards (LWB) must fill contracted, subsidized child care spots using priority waitlists, which include youths in foster care and children of veterans from their service area. These lists do not account for the distance between child care providers and caregivers. Accordingly, LWBs with large service areas waste a considerable amount of time contacting caregivers before finding someone within a reasonable distance of the contracted child care provider.

S.B. 971 would allow child care providers to fill vacant spots using their existing waitlists rather than waiting for the LWB to work through their extensive priority list. This bill would still prioritize foster youths and the children of veterans because they are in a priority group for child care services while also accounting for families' geographic location in relation to child care providers. Ensuring available subsidized child care spots are filled timely would assist families and communities returning to work after the COVID-19 pandemic, help child care providers recovering from revenue losses, and provide services to vulnerable children.

As proposed, S.B. 971 amends current law relating to referring children to local workforce development boards for subsidized child care services.

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 302.0461, Labor Code, by adding Subsection (e), as follows:

(e) Authorizes a local workforce development board (board) to allow a child care provider with whom the board contracts under Subsection (a) (relating to child care providers operating in the board's area) to identify and refer to the board children who could be eligible for subsidized child care services. Requires the child care provider, in making a referral under this subsection, to consider whether the child or the child's parent is a member of a group entitled to a priority in the provision of services provided by or in cooperation with the Texas Workforce Commission, including a priority described by Section 302.152 (Priority of Service Required) of this code or Section 264.121(a)(3) (relating to prioritizing services for foster children participating in the Preparation for Adult Living Program), Family Code.

SECTION 2. Effective date: September 1, 2021.