

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

C.S.H.B. 185  
By: González, Mary  
Youth Health & Safety, Select  
Committee Report (Substituted)

### **BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE**

Representative Mary González reports concerns among Texans that public school students who are experiencing chronic absences receive insufficient support in their schools. If the categorization for "at-risk" students were updated and more data was collected on chronically absent students, schools would be better positioned to support these students and intervene to prevent them from dropping out. Chronic absenteeism is not currently defined in Texas, but experts cited in a Texas Education Agency report define chronic absenteeism as students who miss 10 percent of instructional days during the school year. Prior to the pandemic, chronic absenteeism rates in Texas were 12.5 percent, with disproportionate effect. Students who are chronically absent are seven times more likely to drop out, yet there is no existing infrastructure to support them. Under current statute, students determined to be "at-risk" of dropping out receive additional support services, but chronic absenteeism is not listed as an "at-risk" category. Despite the significant impact of chronic absenteeism on students' persistence in their studies and on graduation rates, there is little data collected or reported to explain what factors cause chronic absenteeism.

C.S.H.B. 185 seeks to address these issues by defining chronic absenteeism, adding chronic absenteeism as an "at-risk" category, and requiring the Texas Education Agency to collect and report data on chronically absent students. Each of these steps would help to better ensure that chronically absent students receive the support they need to graduate high school.

### **CRIMINAL JUSTICE IMPACT**

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly create a criminal offense, increase the punishment for an existing criminal offense or category of offenses, or change the eligibility of a person for community supervision, parole, or mandatory supervision.

### **RULEMAKING AUTHORITY**

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

### **ANALYSIS**

C.S.H.B. 185 amends the Education Code to include a chronically absent student among the students for which each public school district must provide accelerated instruction. The bill defines "chronically absent student" as a student who is absent from school for more than 10 percent of the minutes of school operation time allocated for instruction within a school year or a six-week grade reporting period.

C.S.H.B. 185 includes among the information that must be reported annually by each district and open-enrollment charter school through PEIMS information regarding the total number of chronically absent students enrolled at each campus in the district or school disaggregated by students' race, ethnicity, and status as:

- students enrolled in a special education program;
- students identified as having dyslexia;
- educationally disadvantaged students; and
- emergent bilingual students.

The bill requires the Texas Education Agency to annually aggregate and make publicly available the collected data on student chronic absenteeism. The data must be shown at the campus and district aggregate levels and include the percentage of chronically absent students in each demographic category.

#### **EFFECTIVE DATE**

September 1, 2023.

#### **COMPARISON OF INTRODUCED AND SUBSTITUTE**

While C.S.H.B. 185 may differ from the introduced in minor or nonsubstantive ways, the following summarizes the substantial differences between the introduced and committee substitute versions of the bill.

Whereas the introduced defined "chronically absent student" as a student who is absent from school for more than 10 percent of the days within a school year or a six-week grade reporting period, the substitute defines the term as a student who is absent from school for more than 10 percent of the minutes of school operation time allocated for instruction within a school year or a six-week grade reporting period.