

BILL ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 4870
By: Howard
Public Education
Committee Report (Substituted)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

A matter raised by local leaders within and surrounding House District 48 is that access to college, career, and military readiness and postsecondary credential completion begins with students taking advanced math in middle and high school. However, students who are capable of being successful in advanced math classes do not always choose to take them. Worse, some are even tracked away from these classes despite having a measured aptitude in upper elementary. In Central Texas, recent data from the E3 Alliance shows students who scored in the top 40 percent of all STAAR test-takers received high rates of success on advanced middle school math pathways; however, this same data reveals that of all fifth graders who took the STAAR, fewer than 33 percent of Black and 46 percent of Hispanic students with scores in the top 20 percent had completed Algebra I by eighth grade.

This gap between aptitude and access stands as a barrier to fulfilling the state's Build a Talent Strong Texas strategic plan, since access to advanced math courses creates stronger opportunities to increase postsecondary credential attainment and eventually attain living wages. Currently, math acceleration placement policies vary across Texas school districts. C.S.H.B. 4870 seeks to address this issue by providing for a consistent, statewide policy to ensure high-performing students are prepared to take Algebra I in eighth grade.

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 rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the commissioner of education in SECTION 1 of this bill.

ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 4870 amends the Education Code to require each public school district and open-enrollment charter school, as soon as practicable after the bill's effective date, to develop an advanced mathematics program for middle school students that is designed to enable those students to enroll in Algebra I in eighth grade for purposes of increasing the number of students who complete advanced mathematics courses in high school. The bill requires a district or charter school, under the program, to automatically enroll in an advanced mathematics course each sixth grade student who performed in the top 40 percent on the fifth grade mathematics statewide standardized test or on a local measure that includes the student's fifth grade class ranking or a demonstrated proficiency in the student's fifth grade mathematics coursework. The bill authorizes the parent or guardian of an eligible sixth grade student to opt the student out of automatic enrollment. The bill authorizes the commissioner of education to adopt rules to implement the advanced mathematics program.

EFFECTIVE DATE

On passage, or, if the bill does not receive the necessary vote, September 1, 2023.

COMPARISON OF INTRODUCED AND SUBSTITUTE

While C.S.H.B. 4870 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.

The substitute does not include provisions that were in the introduced requiring districts to establish an opt-out policy to enroll students into accelerated math in sixth grade to improve chances of gaining access to Algebra I in eighth grade and establishing the purpose of that requirement as increasing the number of students completing advanced math in high school propelling them for college and workforce readiness. Instead, the substitute requires districts and charter schools to develop an advanced mathematics program for middle school students that is designed to enable those students to enroll in Algebra I in eighth grade and provides for manner in which an eligible student is automatically enrolled and may be opted out of the program.

The substitute includes the following provisions:

- a requirement absent from the introduced for the districts and charter schools to develop that program as soon as practicable after the bill's effective date; and
- an authorization absent from the introduced for the commissioner of education to adopt rules to implement the advanced mathematics program.