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| BILL ANALYSIS |

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| C.S.H.B. 20 |
| By: Gates |
| Public Education |
| Committee Report (Substituted) |

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| **BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE**  Nationally, the available workforce of skilled workers is not meeting the market's demands, and the Associated Builders and Contractors trade association estimated in early 2024 that over half a million new workers would be needed in addition to the usual pace of hiring for 2024 and over 400,000 new workers would be needed in 2025 to meet labor demands. The association's chief economist noted that this is due in part to outsized retirement levels and too few younger workers entering a skilled trade. The author informed the committee that Texas high school students who do not have the opportunity to achieve the certification necessary to start working in a trade upon high school graduation may need to attend another institution post-graduation to finish their training to enter the skilled workforce. C.S.H.B. 20 seeks to address this issue by creating the Applied Sciences Pathway Program, which authorizes partnerships between public schools and institutions of higher education to allow students to concurrently earn credits towards high school graduation and a certification program with a successful job placement in certain industries. |
| **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. 20 amends the Education Code to require the commissioner of education to establish and administer the Applied Sciences Pathway Program to provide opportunities for students to concurrently earn high school diplomas and certificates from institutions of higher education. The bill requires the commissioner to approve for participation in the program partnerships between public school districts or open-enrollment charter schools and institutions of higher education to provide courses in a non-duplicative sequence of progressive achievement that lead to a high school diploma and completion of a certificate program with a successful job placement rate in high-wage, high-growth jobs in one of the following industries:   * plumbing and pipe fitting; * electrical; * welding; * sheet metal; * carpentry; * masonry; * diesel and heavy equipment; * aviation maintenance; * heating, ventilation, and air conditioning; * construction management and inspection; * mechanical and aerospace engineering; * industrial maintenance and processes; * robotics and automation; * information technology and cybersecurity; * oil and gas exploration and production; * refining and chemical processes; * transportation distribution and logistics; * manufacturing and industrial technology; * electronics technology; or * automotive technology.   The bill authorizes the commissioner, beginning with the 2027-2028 school year, to revise those approved industries once every five years to reflect current labor market trends.  C.S.H.B. 20 requires a partnership participating in the Applied Sciences Pathways Program to do the following:   * enable the district or charter school to provide at least one course of study described by the bill's provisions through a partnership with an institution of higher education; * provide for such a course of study that enables a participating student in grade level 11 or 12 to concurrently:   + enroll in a certificate program described by the bill's provisions at the partnering institution of higher education under which the student may receive instruction from an instructor employed by the institution and any appropriate work-based learning opportunities from the institution and earn a level one or level two certificate, as defined by the commissioner, or another certificate approved by commissioner rule; and   + satisfy high school graduation requirements and receive a high school diploma; * require the partnering district or charter school to permit all district or school students in grade level 11 or 12 to enroll in such a course of study; * be governed by an articulation agreement between the partnering district or charter school and institution of higher education; and * meet any other requirements established by commissioner rule.   C.S.H.B. 20 authorizes the commissioner to approve the substitution of a credit in a subject area required for high school graduation with a credit in a career and technology education course provided by an institution of higher education under the Applied Sciences Pathway Program that substantially covers the essential knowledge and skills of the course for which it is substituted. The bill establishes that this authorization may not be construed to limit the number of substituted credits a student may earn while participating in the program. The bill prohibits a course authorized as a substitute credit from counting for more than one credit toward the student's high school graduation requirements or as a credit for more than one subject area.  C.S.H.B. 20 establishes that the time a student spends participating in the Applied Sciences Pathway Program is counted as part of the minimum number of instructional hours required for a student to be considered a full-time student in average daily attendance. The bill establishes that its provisions may not be construed to do the following:   * prevent a student's participation in career and technology education or dual credit courses before the student begins participating in the program; or * authorize the commissioner to require commissioner approval for partnerships between districts or charter schools and institutions of higher education for purposes other than the program, including partnerships to provide dual credit courses.   C.S.H.B. 20 requires the commissioner to adopt rules as necessary to administer the program. The bill applies beginning with the 2025-2026 school year. |
| **EFFECTIVE DATE**  On passage, or, if the bill does not receive the necessary vote, September 1, 2025. |
| **COMPARISON OF INTRODUCED AND SUBSTITUTE**  While C.S.H.B. 20 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.  Both the introduced and substitute set out the approved industries in which a student may complete a certificate program with a successful job placement rate under the Applied Sciences Pathway Program. However, the substitute includes the following among the approved industries, none of which were included in the introduced:   * mechanical and aerospace engineering; * industrial maintenance and processes; * robotics and automation; * information technology and cybersecurity; * oil and gas exploration and production; * refining and chemical processes; * transportation distribution and logistics; * manufacturing and industrial technology; * electronics technology; and * automotive technology.   The substitute includes an authorization for the commissioner to revise the industries approved for purposes of the Applied Sciences Pathway program once every five years to reflect current labor market trends, which did not appear in the introduced.  The substitute omits the requirement for a course of study provided under the program to be provided at no cost to the student, which was present in the introduced.  The introduced authorized the commissioner to approve the substitution of one credit in a subject area required for high school graduation with one credit in a qualifying career and technology education course provided under the program, whereas the substitute authorizes the commissioner to approve the substitution of a credit in such a subject area with a credit in such a course. The substitute includes a provision absent from the introduced establishing that the bill's provisions providing for such a substitution may not be construed to limit the number of substituted credits a student may earn while participating in the program.  Both the introduced and the substitute establish that the bill's provisions may not be construed to prevent a student's participation in career and technology education courses before the student begins participating in the program. However, the substitute includes provisions absent from the introduced additionally establishing that the bill's provisions may not be construed to prevent a student's participation in dual credit courses before the student begins participating in the program or to authorize the commissioner to require commissioner approval for partnerships between districts or charter schools and institutions of higher education for purposes other than the program, including partnerships to provide dual credit courses. |