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| BILL ANALYSIS |

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| C.S.H.B. 117 |
| By: Schoolcraft |
| Public Education |
| Committee Report (Substituted) |

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| **BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE**  The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families identifies high-quality early childhood education and care as keys to enhancing cognitive development during a child's formative years. C.S.H.B. 117 seeks to put Texas children on the best path to succeed by creating a task force to study and devise a comprehensive interagency plan designed to improve early childhood education and care. |
| **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. 117 amends the Government Code to establish the governor's task force on the governance of early childhood education and care. The task force is administratively attached to the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and is established to address the governance and operational challenges of the early childhood education system in Texas. The bill requires the task force to include a steering committee composed of the following members:   * the executive commissioner of the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC); * the commissioner of TEA; * the chair of the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC); * relevant division directors designated by the aforementioned individuals; and * TEA's interagency deputy director of early childhood support.   The bill provides for the composition of the task force as follows:   * one public school teacher certified to teach prekindergarten; * one certified teacher who is employed by a private child-care facility or prekindergarten program; * a representative from the Texas Head Start State Collaboration Office appointed by the governor; * a representative from the Department of State Health Services appointed by the governor; * two representatives from the Texas Early Learning Council designated by the steering committee; and * at least two but not more than five individuals with knowledge of early childhood education and care or experience as a direct operator of an early childhood education and care program, including business and community leaders, representatives of nonprofit organizations, and other relevant stakeholders, appointed by the governor.   The bill requires the governor to appoint the chair of the task force and exempts the size, composition, and duration of the task force from state law governing state agency advisory committees.  C.S.H.B. 117 requires the task force to take the following actions:   * examine governance and operational challenges in the early childhood education and care system, including federal and local child-care programs and regulations governing those programs; * with a focus on improving government efficiency, conduct a comprehensive review of the existing functions and responsibilities of HHSC, TEA, and TWC related to early childhood education and care; and * consider methods for a large-scale redesign of the administration of early childhood programs to improve efficiency, service delivery, quality of care, and the efficient use of funding.   The bill requires the steering committee of the task force to do the following:   * align goals and metrics of HHSC, TEA, and TWC to measure progress, including aligning statewide data systems; and * require HHSC, TEA, and TWC to complete and submit to the task force periodic progress reports and regularly refine statewide goals and strategic plans to ensure alignment with evolving early childhood education and care needs.   The bill requires TEA, from money appropriated or otherwise available for the purpose, to pay the costs of data system integration, research, and administration for the task force.  C.S.H.B. 117 requires the task force, not later than December 1, 2026, to develop and submit to the legislature policy and budget recommendations designed to improve early childhood education and care governance that will facilitate and improve early childhood education and care participant engagement with state agencies and lead to improved operational efficiency, increased affordable child-care capacity, and improved kindergarten readiness. The task force is abolished and the bill's provisions expire September 1, 2027. |
| **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. 117 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 replaces the commissioner of TWC, as in the introduced version, with the chair of TWC as one of the members composing the steering committee of the task force. The substitute further revises the composition of the task force set out by the introduced version as follows:   * includes as members not included in the introduced version one public school teacher certified to teach prekindergarten and one certified teacher who is employed by a private child-care facility or prekindergarten; * specifies that the task force includes two representatives from the Texas Early Learning Council designated by the steering committee, whereas the introduced did not include a specified number of such representatives from the council; and * with respect to the introduced version's inclusion of individuals with knowledge of or experience with early childhood education and care, including business and community leaders, representatives of nonprofit organizations, and other relevant stakeholders, appointed by the governor:   + specifies that the task force include at least two but not more than five such members; and   + clarifies that the applicable experience with early childhood education and care is experience as a direct operator of an early childhood education and care program.   The substitute omits a provision in the introduced establishing that the exemption of the bill's provisions from state law governing state agency advisory committees is to the extent of a conflict with the bill, and the substitute specifies that those provisions are inapplicable to the size, composition, and duration of the task force, which the introduced did not.  With regard to the required duties of the task force, the substitute does the following:   * specifies that the introduced version's requirement for the task force to conduct a comprehensive review of the existing functions and responsibilities of HHSC, TEA, and TWC related to early childhood education and care is done with a focus on improving government efficiency; * replaces the requirement for the task force to assess the need for a large-scale redesign of the administration of early childhood programs, as in the introduced version, with a requirement for the task force to instead consider methods for a large-scale redesign of the administration of such programs; and * includes improving the efficiency of those programs among the goals of such a redesign, which the introduced did not include.   The substitute transfers from the task force, as in the introduced, to the steering committee the duty to align goals and metrics of HHSC, TEA, and TWC to measure progress and the duty to require those agencies to complete periodic progress reports and regularly refine statewide goals and strategic plans to ensure alignment with evolving early childhood education and care needs. The substitute requires those agencies to submit the progress reports to the task force, which the introduced does not, and omits the requirement present in the introduced for those entities to ensure collaboration with the Texas Early Learning Council for those purposes.  The substitute expands the purposes of the policy and budget recommendations made by the task force required in the introduced version. Whereas the substitute and the introduced both require the recommendations be designed to improve early childhood education and care governance that will lead to increased affordable child care capacity and improved kindergarten readiness, the substitute includes as a purpose of the design that it also lead to improved operational efficiency and facilitate and improve early childhood education and care participant engagement with state agencies. |
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