

BILL ANALYSIS

C.S.S.B. 1535
By: Zaffirini
State Affairs
Committee Report (Substituted)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The bill sponsor has informed the committee that as Texas' nuclear energy sector expands, employers face a shortage of skilled workers in key fields such as nuclear-grade welding, radiological monitoring, reactor operations, and nuclear engineering. C.S.S.B. 1535 seeks to strengthen the state's nuclear workforce and promote the growth of the nuclear energy industry by directing the Texas Workforce Commission to create a workforce development program focused on advanced nuclear energy.

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 Texas Workforce Commission in SECTION 1 of this bill.

ANALYSIS

C.S.S.B. 1535 amends the Labor Code to require the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC), in collaboration with the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) and in consultation with representatives designated by the Public Utility Commission of Texas (PUC) to coordinate the state's nuclear energy strategies, to establish and administer by rule the advanced nuclear energy workforce development program for the purpose of addressing urgent skilled labor demands in the advanced nuclear energy industry in Texas. The bill requires TWC to take the following actions under the program:

- create a strategic plan for addressing labor supply gaps and talent retention issues in the advanced nuclear energy industry and for providing financial assistance, including through the creation of strategic partnerships among public and private entities and advanced nuclear energy industry stakeholders, to incentivize and support the following:
 - the development of programming and outreach efforts designed to create awareness of nuclear science and career opportunities in the field of advanced nuclear energy among public school students;
 - the creation of academic pathways from secondary school to education and training programs at public institutions of higher education in the field of advanced nuclear energy;
 - the creation by institutions of higher education of education and training programs in the field of advanced nuclear energy; and
 - research and leadership development in the field of advanced nuclear energy at general academic teaching institutions; and
- develop customized curriculum requirements for degree and certificate programs to prepare students for high-wage jobs in the advanced nuclear energy industry that, subject to THECB approval, may be offered by an institution of higher education.

C.S.S.B. 1535 requires TWC, in developing such curriculum requirements, to do the following:

- consult with the designated representatives of the PUC, employers in the advanced nuclear energy industry, and representatives of TEA, the THECB, general academic teaching institutions, public technical institutes, and public junior colleges; and
- focus on developing academic pathways to and curricula for programs leading to high-wage jobs in the areas of nuclear-grade welding, radiological control and monitoring, reactor operations, nuclear instrumentation and control, and nuclear, electrical, chemical, civil, and environmental engineering.

C.S.S.B. 1535 requires TWC, not later than September 1 of each year and in consultation with TEA and the THECB, to prepare and submit to each standing committee of the legislature with primary jurisdiction over workforce development, higher education, or energy industry matters, a report summarizing TWC's activities under the program. The report may include TWC's recommendations for legislative or other action.

C.S.S.B. 1535 defines "general academic teaching institution," "institution of higher education," "public junior college," and "public technical institute" by reference to Education Code provisions governing the THECB.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2025.

COMPARISON OF SENATE ENGROSSED AND SUBSTITUTE

While C.S.S.B. 1535 may differ from the engrossed in minor or nonsubstantive ways, the following summarizes the substantial differences between the engrossed and committee substitute versions of the bill.

The substitute includes TEA as an entity with which TWC is required to collaborate in establishing and administering the program, whereas the engrossed did not.

While both the engrossed and the substitute include the provision of financial assistance to incentivize and support certain activities as a component of the required strategic plan, the substitute includes the following activities absent from the engrossed:

- the development of programming and outreach efforts designed to create awareness of nuclear science and career opportunities in the field of advanced nuclear energy among public school students; and
- the creation of academic pathways from secondary school to education and training programs at institutions of higher education in the field of advanced nuclear energy.

The substitute makes the following changes to the engrossed version's requirements for TWC in developing the customized curriculum requirements under the program:

- includes representatives of TEA among the entities with which TWC must consult; and
- expands the requirement for TWC to focus on developing curricula for programs leading to high-wage jobs in certain specified areas relating to the nuclear energy industry by also providing for a focus on developing academic pathways to such jobs.

The substitute includes TEA as an entity with which TWC must consult in preparing the annual report summarizing TWC's activities under the program, whereas the engrossed did not.