



Senate Education Friday, April 17, 2009

On Thursday, April 16, the Senate Education Committee passed out several bills and discussed **Senate Bill 3** by **Shapiro** which lays out changes to the public school accountability system. This bill was left pending but **Senator Shapiro** announced that a vote will be taken on this bill on Tuesday morning, April 21.

SB 3 Shapiro Relating to public school accountability, curriculum, and promotion requirements.

Remarks: Please visit www.moakcasey.com for more information.

Action: Senator Shapiro began laying out her bill by apologizing for not getting the draft of the substitute out earlier. She then went on to note the changes to the bill and how it differs from the original version. While she did not take public testimony on the substitute she took questions and comments from the rest of the committee and announced that they intend to vote on the bill Tuesday, April 21. **Senator Shapiro** discussed the issue of college readiness and its importance to the new system. She noted that in the beginning standards will be low, but the intention is to build up over time until Texas is one of the leading states in the country on college readiness. She also emphasized the importance of implementing realistic goals. At this point, **Senator West** inquired as to the possibility of rolling the new system out as a pilot program. **Shapiro** responded that while this system can be done statewide, the possibility should be discussed. She also revealed that Texas would be the first state in the country to actually incorporate college readiness standards into its accountability system.

Senator Davis expressed the concerns of her constituents that her districts may face over 60 indicators. She also pointed out that no one knows how “college ready” standards will be defined. In response to these concerns, **Senator Shapiro** stated that indicators are the only way to see how a subgroup is performing so they do not want to take away any indicators but would like to get an exemption for some districts from a set percentage of measures. For schools following reconstitution, **Senator Shapiro** emphasized that they will give schools an extra year (increasing the limit from two to three years) and will not ask any campus to rename their school.

Senator Van de Putte stated that anything that references uniform GPA needs to be removed from the bill and **Senator Shapiro** agreed. **Van de Putte** also addressed the issue of students who are asylees. This sparked a discussion with **Senator Patrick** who expressed concerns with how asylee students will be distinguished from students who are here illegally. **Senator Patrick** also expressed his preference to have more emphasis placed on having qualified counselors in schools.

Senator Davis inquired as to what discretion the Commission of Education currently has over exceptions to indicator measures. **David Anderson (TEA)** testified that this bill would limit the Commissioner

because it sets a threshold of 15 percent of measures that could be excepted if performance is within five percentage points of the standard. At this time, **Senator Van de Putte** asked about the current number of indicators and **Senator Shapiro** took the opportunity to add that they have only added 10 indicators. **Senator Van de Putte** asked how this bill will impact charters and **Senator Shapiro** indicated that accountability requirements related to charter schools would be addressed in a separate bill. **Senator Van de Putte** also expressed concern with the projected deficit and the effects this will have on financial accountability. **Senator Davis** suggested giving the Commissioner the same discretion over principals that he has over teachers.

This bill was left pending.

SB 1344 Watson Relating to an alcohol awareness component of the health curriculum used in public schools.

Remarks: The SBOE shall adopt essential knowledge and skills that address the dangers, causes, consequences, signs, symptoms, and treatment of binge drinking and alcohol poisoning. The agency shall compile a list of alcohol awareness evidence-based programs from which a school district shall choose for use in the district's health curriculum.

Action: Passed to Local and Uncontested Calendar.

SB 1933 Carona Relating to the confidentiality of information and documents collected during a school district security audit.

Remarks: Any document or information collected during a security audit is not subject to disclosure.

Action: Passed to the full Senate with favorable recommendation.

SB 2248 Zaffirini Relating to public school students placed in foster care.

Remarks: TEA shall assist the transition of foster care students from one school to another by:

1. Ensuring that school records for a student in foster care are transferred to the student's new school not later than the 14th day after the date the student begins enrollment at the school;
2. Developing systems to ease transition of a student in foster care during the first two weeks of enrollment at a new school;
3. Developing procedures for awarding credit for course work, including electives, completed by a student in foster care while enrolled at another school;
4. Promoting practices that facilitate access by a student in foster care to extracurricular programs, summer programs, credit transfer services, electronic courses, and after-school tutoring programs at minimum or no cost;
5. Establishing procedures to lessen the adverse impact of the movement of a student in foster care to a new school after the end of the student's junior year of high school;
6. Encouraging or maintaining partnerships between the Department of Family and Protective Services, foster parents, and affected school districts;
7. Encouraging school districts and open-enrollment charter schools to provide services for a student in foster care in transition when applying for admission to postsecondary study and when seeking sources of funding for postsecondary study;

8. Requiring school districts, campuses, and open-enrollment charter schools to accept a referral for special education services made for a student in foster care by a school previously attended by the student; and
9. Providing other assistance as identified by the agency.

Action: Passed to Local and Uncontested Calendar.