SUBJECT: Allowing computer science courses to count as a math or science credit

COMMITTEE: Public Education — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 11 ayes — Huberty, Bernal, Allen, Bohac, Deshotel, Dutton, Gooden, K. King, Koop, Meyer, VanDeaver

0 nays

WITNESSES: For — Andrew Lentz, CodeRGV, Inc.; Teclo Garcia and Cristina Garza, Mission Economic Development Corporation; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Katija Gruene, Green Party of Texas; Mike Meroney, Huntsman Corporation, BASF Corporation, Texas Workforce Coalition; Marlene Lobberecht, League of Women Voters of Texas; Annie Spilman, National Federation of Independent Business/Texas; Deborah Caldwell, North East Independent School District; David Velky, Rocksprings ISD; Priscilla Camacho, San Antonio Chamber of Commerce; Dwight Harris and Ted Melina Raab, Texas American Federation of Teachers; Miranda Goodsheller, Texas Association of Business; Stephanie Simpson, Texas Association of Manufacturers; Michael White, Texas Construction Association; Ellen Arnold, Texas PTA; Erin Jones, The College Board; Thomas Parkinson)

Against — None

On — Courtney Arbour, Texas Workforce Commission; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Dana Harris, Austin Chamber of Commerce; Monica Martinez, Texas Education Agency)

BACKGROUND: Under Education Code, sec. 28.025(b-1), a public high school student must receive a certain number of course credits in different subject areas, including three math credits and three science credits, in order to graduate under the foundation high school program.

DIGEST: CSHB 728 would require the Commissioner of Education to develop and implement a program allowing public high school students in participating

districts to count an advanced computer science course toward an advanced science or advanced math credit needed to graduate. Participating school districts would have to implement rigorous standards developed by the State Board of Education for advanced computer science courses focused on the creation and use of software and computing technologies.

The commissioner would be required to establish the program no later than September 1, 2018, for implementation during the 2018-19 school year.

This bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house. Otherwise, it would take effect September 1, 2017.

SUPPORTERS SAY:

CSHB 728 would create a program to allow computer science courses to count toward a student's required advanced math or advanced science credit, encouraging students to develop valuable skills that would expand opportunities after high school. Careers in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) will be among the fastest-growing careers in coming years, and by 2018, 51 percent of all STEM jobs will be computer science related. Advanced computer science courses can provide the groundwork for an information technology-related job right out of high school or a degree in computer science that could lead to a high-paying career.

Computer science skills provided through these high school courses are in high demand and are important to a growing number of industries, including transportation, health care, education, and financial services. Developing a workforce with these skills is necessary for Texas to remain competitive. By letting students count a computer science course as an advanced math or science credit, the bill would incentivize more students to participate in these courses, thereby increasing the number of students gaining these valuable skills.

Allowing computer science courses to count toward an advanced science

or advanced math credit would give students more flexibility in their graduation plans. CSHB 728 could help more students fit computer science course into their schedules by allowing them to count toward core subject requirements, as well as current language and elective requirements.

OPPONENTS SAY:

No apparent opposition.

NOTES:

A companion bill, SB 1336 by Hinojosa, was referred to the Senate Education Committee on March 14.

CSHB 728 differs from the bill as filed in certain ways, including that the committee substitute would:

- require the State Board of Education, rather than the commissioner, to develop the computer science course standards; and
- change the implementation date from September 1, 2017, to September 1, 2018, for implementation during the 2018-19 school year.