
**Community & Economic Development &
Trade Committee**

HB 1666

Brief Description: Authorizing the creation of cultural access authorities.

Sponsors: Representatives Kenney, Simpson, Haler, Walsh, Kessler, Dickerson, White, Pedersen, Santos and Pettigrew.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Authorizes counties above a specified population threshold to create cultural access authorities.
- Authorizes a cultural access authority to impose a voter-approved sales and use tax of up to 0.1 percent to fund cultural access projects.

Hearing Date: 2/9/09

Staff: Chris Cordes (786-7103)

Background:

A variety of special districts may be created by counties, cities, or towns to provide various public facilities and finance these facilities by imposing various taxes.

For example, counties may create public facilities districts to construct and operate regional centers, sports and recreational facilities (other than ski areas,) entertainment facilities, convention facilities, and related parking facilities. Public facilities districts are governed by an appointed board of directors with specified statutory authority. These districts are municipal corporations and taxing districts.

Public facilities districts may impose various taxes to finance their facilities, including a voter-approved 2 percent lodging tax on certain premises, a regional center admissions tax not exceeding 5 percent, a vehicle parking tax not exceeding 10 percent, a voter-approved sales and

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use tax not exceeding 0.2 percent, and an additional nonvoter-approved sales and use tax not exceeding 0.033 percent that is deducted from the state's sales and use taxes.

Summary of Bill:

A Cultural Access Authority (CAA) may be created by certain counties, with funding to include a voter-approved sales and use tax. A CAA would allocate funding to various projects, including public school cultural access programs and other cultural organization programs of regional benefit.

A cultural organization's primary purpose must be the advancement and preservation of science or technology, the visual or performing arts, zoology, botany, anthropology, or cultural or natural history, with direct programming or experiences for the general public.

Creation of a CAA.

A CAA may be created by:

- a county with a population of more than 175,000; or
- a contiguous group of up to four counties, including at least one county with a population of more than 150,000.

The CAA service area must be coextensive with the boundaries of the participating county or counties, including incorporated areas.

A CAA is a municipal corporation and a taxing district. It is subject to audits by the state auditor and to various other general laws applying to local governments, including the prohibition on using its facilities for campaign purposes and the municipal ethics code.

A CAA must be dissolved after three years if a tax proposition to fund the CAA has not been approved. Once dissolved, a new CAA may not be created by the same county or counties for three years following dissolution.

CAA Boards.

For a single county CAA, the CAA is governed by a five-member board, with four members appointed by the county legislative authority and one by the Governor.

For a CAA with two or three participating counties, the CAA is governed by a seven-member board, with six members appointed as specified in the counties' inter-local agreement and one member appointed by the Governor.

For a CAA with up to four participating counties with an aggregate population of more than 2.5 million:

- A two-county CAA is governed by a board with one member appointed by each county and by each of the two largest cities in the larger county, one member appointed by the largest city in the smaller county, and two members appointed by the Governor.

- A CAA with three or four participating counties is governed by a board with one member appointed by each county and by each of the two largest cities in the larger county, one member appointed by the largest city in each of the other participating counties, and two members appointed by the Governor.

After the initial terms of office, CAA board members serve staggered four-year terms.

CAA Funding.

Start-up Funding. The county or counties creating a CAA must advance up to \$1 million per year for up to three years for administrative costs, including the cost of informing the public about the formation of the CAA, how it is to be funded, and the public benefits. Start-up funding must be provided pro rata by each participating county.

Start-up funding must be repaid, with interest, from the proceeds of voter-approved sales and use tax. However, the start-up funds are not required to be repaid if the CAA is dissolved for failing to secure the voter-approved tax.

Tax Authority. A CAA may submit a sales and use tax proposition to authority voters for approval by a majority of those voting. This tax is in addition to other taxes and may not exceed 0.1 percent. A tax imposed by the CAA expires seven years after it is first collected, but may be resubmitted to the voters for additional seven-year terms.

A county or city appointing board members must affirm that funding available under these provisions does not supplant the usual and customary funding provided to cultural organizations by these jurisdictions.

Other Funding. A CAA may accept grants, loans, and other contributions from any source, as long as it does not compete with cultural organization fund raising.

Allocation of the CAA Funds.

Large CAAs. A CAA in a single county with a service area population of more than 1.5 million or a CAA formed by a group of counties with a service area population of more than 2.5 million must allocate funds in the following priority:

- repayment of start-up funds;
- administrative costs (up to 1.25 percent of total funds);
- a public school cultural access program (10 percent of remaining funds) and other projects of regional benefit within the service area;
- distributions, based on average annual revenues and attendance ranking, to nonprofit regional organizations with minimum annual revenues of at least \$1.25 million, to be annually adjusted for inflation (75 percent of remaining funds); and
- distributions to public agencies designated by the legislative authorities of the participating counties to fund grants to community-based organizations (any remaining funds.)

Other CAAs. These CAAs allocate funds in the following priority:

- administrative costs, including start-up funding and projects of regional benefit (up to 5 percent of total funding, with half for administrative funding);
- a public school cultural access program (amount determined by the CAA Board);
- distributions to regional organizations (amount determined by the CAA Board, but not more than 75 percent of available funds); and
- an entity in each county that makes grants to community-based cultural organizations (remaining funds.)

Programs Supported by a CAA.

Public school cultural access programs must be designed to increase public school student access to programs offered by regional and community-based organizations receiving the CAA grant funding and, among other things, must include a centralized service to coordinate opportunities, funding for transportation, and an annual school access plan and annual report.

Grants for projects of regional benefit are awarded on a competitive basis at least annually. Projects may include public information and promotional activities, support for new cultural organizations, and support for specific projects to expand access to underserved populations.

Distributions to regional organizations must be used to support cultural and educational activities and basic operations of the organization, but not capital expenditures. A regional organization may not receive more than 15 percent of its annual revenues. Funding to community-based organizations may be used for both operating costs and capital expenditures.

CAA Operations.

The CAA board members may receive \$50 per day for attending meetings on behalf of the CAA, up to \$3,000 per year. A CAA board must adopt procedures for expense reimbursement.

A CAA board may hire employees and establish wages and benefits. A CAA is eligible to participate in the state public employees' retirement system.

A CCA board may appoint an advisory council with representation from business, education, and cultural communities.

A CAA board must adopt ethics policies consistent with applicable law and applicable best practices for board members, officers, and employees.

The CAA board members and employees are not personally liable for acts done, or omitted, in good faith while performing authority duties.

Accountability Measures.

A CAA may provide funding only to cultural organizations that provide discernible public benefits. Public benefits include providing reasonable opportunities for access to programs or services on a reduced or no admission basis, providing services and educational programs in locations other than the organization's facilities, broadening cultural programs and exhibitions

for the enlightenment and entertainment of the public, and supporting collaborative relationships and capacity-building projects for the benefit of the public.

Annually or at the conclusion of a project, any recipient of funding must report to the CAA or relevant public agency on the public benefits realized.

A CAA must adopt a baseline standard of performance for evaluating the continuing eligibility of organizations to receive funding.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.