

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1803

As Reported by House Committee On:
Education

Title: An act relating to increasing the number of school districts that may be authorized to reduce the minimum number of required school days in a school year.

Brief Description: Increasing the number of school districts that may be authorized to reduce the minimum number of required school days in a school year.

Sponsors: Representatives Orcutt and Santos.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/12/19, 2/18/19 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Increases the number of waivers that the Superintendent of Public Instruction may grant to small school districts requesting permission to reduce the minimum number of school days required in a school year.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 18 members: Representatives Santos, Chair; Dolan, Vice Chair; Paul, Vice Chair; Steele, Ranking Minority Member; McCaslin, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Volz, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bergquist, Caldier, Callan, Corry, Harris, Kilduff, Kraft, Ortiz-Self, Rude, Thai, Valdez and Ybarra.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 1 member: Representative Stonier.

Staff: Ethan Moreno (786-7386).

Background:

The Legislature establishes the minimum instructional program of basic education that must be offered by school districts. Among other requirements, the state's program of basic education obligates school districts to:

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- provide instruction in the essential academic learning standards, the grade-level learning standards developed by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; and
- have their educational program accessible to all students who are at least 5 years of age and less than 21 years of age for a minimum of 180 days per school year.

School districts are also required to provide a specified minimum number of instructional hours per year, which are defined as those hours during which students are provided the opportunity to engage in educational activity planned by, and under the direction of, school district staff.

School districts may seek waivers for certain education laws and rules under prescribed circumstances. For example, the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) is authorized to grant three-year renewable waivers from the 180-day school year requirement to districts that "propose to operate one or more schools on a flexible calendar for purposes of economy and efficiency."

A school district seeking a waiver from the 180-day school year requirement must submit an application to the SPI that meets specific content requirements. For example, the application must include:

- a proposed calendar for the school day and school year that demonstrates how instructional hour requirements will be maintained;
- an explanation and estimate of the economies and efficiencies to be gained from compressing the instructional hours into fewer than 180 days; and
- a summary of comments received at one or more public hearings on the proposal and how concerns will be addressed.

The SPI is limited to issuing waivers to five or fewer districts, and eligible districts may not have more than 500 students. Of the five waivers that may be issued, two must be reserved for districts with fewer than 150 students.

Summary of Bill:

The SPI may grant 15 or fewer, rather than five or fewer, waivers to small school districts requesting permission to reduce the minimum number of school days required in a school year.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This bill resulted from a constituent who indicated that all five of the waiver slots that allow for reductions in the minimum number of required school days each year have been issued. The waiver program is working well, and it makes sense to expand the number of districts that could be eligible for the waiver. Nothing in the legislation requires a district to take action, as school districts have the option of applying for a waiver.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Orcutt, prime sponsor.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.