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Lucio Bill to Establish Medical Facilities for Special Needs Children Passes Out of Senate Committee

AUSTIN - Today, the Texas Senate Committee on Health and Human Services unanimously passed a bill by Senator Eddie Lucio, Jr. (D-Brownsville) which would allow for the creation of specialized day health facilities for special needs children. These facilities will allow children to flourish in a group setting, provide working parents relief, and reduce overall health care costs.

[Senate Bill 492](#) authorizes the [Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services](#) (DADS) to license and regulate a new type of non-residential medical day health facility, known as a Prescribed Pediatric Extended Care Center (PPEC). These facilities would treat children with complex disabilities that would otherwise require in-home nursing or hospitalization.

"Prescribed Pediatric Extended Care Centers allow children with specialized medical needs to receive proper treatment in a child-friendly and developmentally-appropriate environment. Instead of being isolated at home or in a hospital, these children get to spend their days socializing with other children," Senator Lucio said. "These facilities also offer working parents a viable option for care after school, on non-school days, or when their child's medical condition makes it impossible for them to attend school."

PPECs already exist in several other states, including Florida, Louisiana, Delaware, Mississippi, Kentucky, and Pennsylvania.

Under Senate Bill 492, children would be eligible to attend a PPEC if they have a condition or disability that requires ongoing, technologically-based skilled nursing supervision, or requires the routine use of a medical device to compensate for a life-sustaining body function. For example, children with complications from congenital muscular dystrophy or cerebral palsy, or children whose condition requires the use of special feeding or breathing apparatuses would generally qualify to attend a PPEC.

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Children who would qualify to attend a PPEC are already eligible to private nursing care under the federal Medicaid program. Senate Bill 492 merely provides another resource at which parents may direct their Medicaid dollars. Parents would ultimately still choose what type of treatment works best for their child.

PPECs are more cost-effective than private nursing services for technologically-dependent children, thus saving Medicaid dollars. PPECs save Medicaid at least 30 percent as compared to nursing care.

Senate Bill 492 permits DADS to regulate how private or nonprofit PPECs are staffed, built, renovated, and serviced, in order to ensure the health, safety, and comfort of the children under their care. Under the bill, special needs children from birth up to age 21 may receive physician-prescribed services at a PPEC up to 12 hours a day. Not more than 60 children who may attend any one PPEC.

Now passed out of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services, Senate Bill 492 must be considered by the full Senate before moving to the Texas House of Representatives for consideration and ultimate passage.

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