

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
86R14247 JRJ-D

S.B. 1539
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Veteran Affairs & Border Security
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As Filed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Having a sense of community and direction is essential for freshman college students. Currently, many universities, such as The University of Texas, have Freshman Interest Groups (FIGs). These groups provide vital services and opportunities for students, potentially altering what paths students take throughout their academic career and thereafter. S.B. 1539 serves to remodel this program specifically for student veterans within a pilot program.

S.B. 1539 establishes a pilot program for student veterans by creating Veteran Interest Groups (VIGs) through the help of Texas A&M San Antonio into Alamo Colleges. This pilot program would entail student veterans to take three classes together their first fall semester at the university. Each group attends a weekly seminar led by a peer mentor and a staff facilitator.

VIGs would help student veterans develop a sense of community as they attend class, study and participate in various activities and events with their mentor and fellow freshmen. In addition to learning content, students discuss issues such as study and time management strategies, campus life and involvement opportunities, and social opportunities and issues. Under S.B. 1539, veteran students would receive academic and extracurricular programs, in addition to valuable mentorship opportunities.

As proposed, S.B. 1539 amends current law relating to the establishment of a pilot program for certain students who are veterans.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Subchapter F, Chapter 130, Education Code, by adding Section 130.095, as follows:

Sec. 130.095. VETERAN INTEREST GROUPS PILOT PROGRAM. (a) Requires the Alamo Community College District (ACCD) to implement a pilot program to establish veteran interest groups for students enrolled in ACCD who are veterans.

(b) Requires ACCD to ensure that students assigned to a group established under the pilot program enroll in at least three of the same classes as the other students assigned to the group.

(c) Requires students assigned to a group established under the pilot program to attend a weekly seminar led by a peer mentor and a staff facilitator in which the students learn content related to the needs of students who are veterans, discuss study and time management strategies and other issues, engage in campus life and other involvement opportunities, and participate in social opportunities.

(d) Requires ACCD, not later than January 1, 2021, to prepare a report on the effectiveness of the pilot program in promoting the success of students who are

veterans and submit the report to the standing committees of each house of the legislature with primary jurisdiction over higher education matters and matters concerning veterans affairs.

(e) Provides that this section expires September 1, 2021.

SECTION 2. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2019.