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By:  Thierry H.B. No. 809

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to measures to assist students enrolled at public institutions of higher education who are homeless or who were formerly in foster care.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1.  Section 51.9356, Education Code, is amended to read as follows:

Sec. 51.9356.  DESIGNATION OF LIAISON OFFICER TO ASSIST STUDENTS WHO WERE FORMERLY IN FOSTER CARE OR WHO ARE HOMELESS. (a) In this section:

(1)  "Institution[~~, "institution~~] of higher education" has the meaning assigned by Section 61.003.

(2)  "Students who are homeless" has the meaning assigned to the term "homeless children and youths" under 42 U.S.C. Section 11434a and includes students who reside in a student housing facility maintained by an institution of higher education during an academic term but who are homeless between academic terms.

(b)  Each institution of higher education shall designate at least one employee of the institution to act as a liaison officer for current and incoming:

(1)  students [~~at the institution~~] who were formerly in the conservatorship of the Department of Family and Protective Services; and

(2)  students who are homeless.

(c)  The liaison officer shall:

(1)  contact a person designated under 42 U.S.C. Section 11432(g)(1)(J)(ii) as necessary to facilitate the transition of students described by Subsection (b) from secondary to postsecondary education; and

(2)  provide to those students information regarding support services and other resources available to the students at the institution of higher education, including information about financial aid, on-campus and off-campus housing, food and meal programs, counseling services, and any other relevant information to assist the students.

(d)  The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board shall adopt rules and establish policies and procedures to ensure that a liaison officer designated under this section to serve students who are homeless participates in a professional development program under 42 U.S.C. Section 11432(d)(5).

SECTION 2.  The heading to Section 51.978, Education Code, is amended to read as follows:

Sec. 51.978.  TEMPORARY HOUSING BETWEEN ACADEMIC TERMS FOR CERTAIN STUDENTS WHO WERE FORMERLY UNDER CONSERVATORSHIP OF DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES OR WHO ARE HOMELESS.

SECTION 3.  Section 51.978(a), Education Code, is amended by adding Subdivision (3) to read as follows:

(3)  "Students who are homeless" has the meaning assigned to the term "homeless children and youths" under 42 U.S.C. Section 11434a and includes students who reside in a student housing facility maintained by an institution of higher education during an academic term but who are homeless between academic terms.

SECTION 4.  Section 51.978(b), Education Code, is amended to read as follows:

(b)  To be eligible to receive housing assistance from an institution of higher education under Subsection (c), a student must:

(1)  be:

(A)  a student who has [~~have~~] been under the conservatorship of the Department of Family and Protective Services or its predecessor in function on the day preceding:

(i) [~~(A)~~]  the student's 18th birthday; or

(ii) [~~(B)~~]  the date the student's disabilities of minority are removed by a court under Chapter 31, Family Code; or

(B)  a student who is homeless;

(2)  be enrolled full-time at the institution during the academic term:

(A)  for which the student requests the housing assistance; or

(B)  immediately preceding the period for which the student requests the housing assistance;

(3)  be registered or otherwise have taken the actions required by the institution to permit the student to enroll full-time at the institution during the academic term immediately following the period for which the student requests the housing assistance; and

(4)  lack other reasonable temporary housing alternatives between the academic terms described by Subdivisions (2) and (3), as determined by the institution.

SECTION 5.  Subchapter Z, Chapter 51, Education Code, is amended by adding Section 51.9781 to read as follows:

Sec. 51.9781.  PRIORITY ACCESS TO STUDENT HOUSING FOR STUDENTS WHO ARE HOMELESS. (a) In this section:

(1)  "Institution of higher education" has the meaning assigned by Section 61.003.

(2)  "Students who are homeless" has the meaning assigned to the term "homeless children and youths" under 42 U.S.C. Section 11434a and includes students who reside in a student housing facility maintained by an institution of higher education during an academic term but who are homeless between academic terms.

(b)  An institution of higher education that maintains student housing facilities shall give priority in the assignment of housing in those facilities to students who are homeless.

SECTION 6.  Section 61.0908, Education Code, is amended to read as follows:

Sec. 61.0908.  DESIGNATION OF LIAISON OFFICER TO ASSIST STUDENTS WHO WERE FORMERLY IN FOSTER CARE OR WHO ARE HOMELESS. (a) In this section, "students who are homeless" has the meaning assigned to the term "homeless children and youths" under 42 U.S.C. Section 11434a and includes students who reside in a student housing facility maintained by an institution of higher education during an academic term but who are homeless between academic terms.

(b)  The board shall designate at least one employee of the board to act as a liaison officer for the following current and incoming students at institutions of higher education:

(1)  students who were formerly in the conservatorship of the Department of Family and Protective Services; and

(2)  students who are homeless.

(c)  The liaison officer shall assist in coordinating college readiness and student success efforts relating to [~~those~~] students described by Subsection (b).

(d)  The board shall establish policies and procedures to ensure that a liaison officer designated under this section to serve students who are homeless participates in a professional development program under 42 U.S.C. Section 11432(d)(5).

SECTION 7.  (a)  As soon as practicable after the effective date of this Act, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board shall adopt rules and establish policies and procedures as required by Section 51.9356, Education Code, as amended by this Act.

(b)  As soon as practicable after the effective date of this Act, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board shall establish policies and procedures as required by Section 61.0908, Education Code, as amended by this Act.

(c)  Not later than January 1, 2020, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board shall designate a liaison officer as required by Section 61.0908, Education Code, as amended by this Act.

SECTION 8.  This Act takes effect immediately if it receives a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this Act takes effect September 1, 2019.