

By: Watson, Hall

S.B. No. 2231

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to the exemption of tuition and laboratory fees at public institutions of higher education for certain paramedics.

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

SECTION 1. The heading to Section 54.353, Education Code, is amended to read as follows:

Sec. 54.353. FIREFIGHTERS OR PARAMEDICS ENROLLED IN FIRE SCIENCE COURSES.

SECTION 2. Section 54.353, Education Code, is amended by amending Subsections (a) and (f) and adding Subsection (e-1) to read as follows:

(a) The governing board of an institution of higher education shall exempt from the payment of tuition and laboratory fees any student enrolled in one or more courses offered as part of a fire science curriculum who:

(1) is employed as a firefighter or a paramedic by a political subdivision of this state; or

(2) is currently, and has been for at least one year, an active member of an organized volunteer fire department participating in the Texas Emergency Services Retirement System or a retirement system established under the Texas Local Fire Fighters Retirement Act (Article 6243e, Vernon's Texas Civil Statutes) and who holds:

(A) an Accredited Advanced level of

1 certification, or an equivalent successor certification, under the  
2 State Firemen's and Fire Marshals' Association of Texas volunteer  
3 certification program; or

4 (B) Phase V (Firefighter II) certification, or an  
5 equivalent successor certification, under the Texas Commission on  
6 Fire Protection's voluntary certification program under Section  
7 [419.071](#), Government Code.

8 (e-1) Notwithstanding Subsection (a), the governing board  
9 of an institution of higher education may, in accordance with Texas  
10 Higher Education Coordinating Board rule, exclude from the  
11 exemption under this section a course that is offered through  
12 distance education.

13 (f) The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board shall  
14 adopt:

15 (1) rules governing the granting or denial of an  
16 exemption under this section, including rules:

17 (A) prescribing the educational attainment or  
18 level of certification necessary to qualify for an exemption as a  
19 paramedic;

20 (B) relating to the determination of a student's  
21 eligibility for an exemption; and

22 (C) relating to the exclusion from the exemption  
23 under Subsection (e-1) of a distance education course, including  
24 prescribing the maximum number of distance education courses that  
25 may be excluded from the exemption under that subsection; and

26 (2) a uniform listing of degree programs covered by  
27 the exemption under this section.

1           SECTION 3. (a) The Texas Higher Education Coordinating  
2 Board shall adopt the rules required by Section 54.353(f),  
3 Education Code, as amended by this Act, as soon as practicable after  
4 the effective date of this Act.

5           (b) Section 54.353, Education Code, as amended by this Act,  
6 applies beginning with tuition and laboratory fees charged for the  
7 2019 fall semester. Tuition and laboratory fees charged for an  
8 academic period before that semester are covered by the law in  
9 effect immediately before the effective date of this Act, and the  
10 former law is continued in effect for that purpose.

11          SECTION 4. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives  
12 a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as  
13 provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this  
14 Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this  
15 Act takes effect September 1, 2019.