

BILL ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 237
By: Bernal
Higher Education
Committee Report (Substituted)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

In Texas, many students leave postsecondary educational institutions with student debt before completing their degree. It is common practice among these institutions to withhold official transcripts unless the outstanding debt is paid in full, which negatively impacts students who wish to later complete their postsecondary experience and harms their ability to seek additional learning, career, and employment opportunities. Students who leave college because of the inability to pay are left with more debt, fewer job prospects, and a general inability to advance themselves. Furthermore, they are typically trapped in an unyielding cycle as they are unable to submit transcripts when later applying to further their education or when applying for a job, thereby limiting their opportunities to repay their loans. C.S.H.B. 237 seeks to remedy this situation by providing greater access to certain academic records.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE IMPACT

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly create a criminal offense, increase the punishment for an existing criminal offense or category of offenses, or change the eligibility of a person for community supervision, parole, or mandatory supervision.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 237 amends the Education Code to require a public, private, or independent institution of higher education and a career school or college to release a student's transcript or certificate of completion of training, as applicable, to the student on the student's request, except that for a student who has not fulfilled the student's financial obligation to an applicable institution, the institution is required only to release a transcript or certificate directly to an employer or another postsecondary educational institution if the student's request meets certain criteria. The bill authorizes an institution to charge a reasonable fee in connection with the release of the document and requires the amount of such a fee to be the same for each student, subject to a certain exception.

C.S.H.B. 237 removes language specifying that a person who is liable to a public institution of higher education for unpaid nonresident tuition due to an erroneous residency classification is not entitled to receive an official transcript that includes credit for courses taken while the person was misclassified.

C.S.H.B. 237 repeals Section 132.062, Education Code, which authorizes a career school or college to withhold a student's transcript or certificate until the student's financial obligation to the school or college has been fulfilled.

EFFECTIVE DATE

On passage, or, if the bill does not receive the necessary vote, September 1, 2021.

COMPARISON OF ORIGINAL AND SUBSTITUTE

While C.S.H.B. 237 may differ from the original in minor or nonsubstantive ways, the following summarizes the substantial differences between the introduced and committee substitute versions of the bill.

The substitute includes as a requisite condition under which an applicable institution must release a transcript or certificate directly to an employer or another postsecondary educational institution on request by a student who has not fulfilled their financial obligation to the institution the condition that the student has made a good faith effort to fulfill the financial obligation, which was not in the original.