

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 546
By: Pacheco
Higher Education
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

There have been calls to extend eligibility of certain financial assistance programs that are currently available to schools accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges, making Western Governors University-Texas students ineligible to participate in those programs. H.B. 546 seeks to address these calls by making specified loan repayment assistance programs available to students at certain nonprofit, tax-exempt, regionally accredited colleges or universities.

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 rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in SECTION 12 of this bill.

ANALYSIS

H.B. 546 amends the Education Code to extend eligibility for certain educational loan repayment assistance programs to a student at a nonprofit, tax-exempt, regionally accredited college or university operating in accordance with a memorandum of understanding with the state under an executive order of the governor. The extension of eligibility applies to the following state programs:

- repayment assistance for certain mental health professionals;
- the professional nursing shortage reduction program;
- the Texas hospital-based nursing education partnership grant program; and
- the nursing faculty loan repayment assistance program.

H.B. 546 requires the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) to adopt any rules necessary to administer the bill's provisions. The bill prohibits the THECB from awarding grants under the bill's provisions relating to the professional nursing shortage reduction program before June 1, 2023.

EFFECTIVE DATE

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