

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 1482
By: Johnson, Jarvis
Higher Education
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

It has been reported that homeless youth, who include many young people who have aged out of state foster care, face a variety of obstacles such as mental health problems, substance use problems, and involvement in criminal activity. Homeless youth also face substantial barriers to higher education, which may include attendance policies, residency requirements, and transportation issues. There have been calls to improve the supports offered to homeless youth attending public universities to parallel the supports mandated for students who were in foster care. H.B. 1482 seeks to address these calls by providing for the appointment of liaison officers to assist students who are homeless and requiring cooperation between specified state agencies to facilitate the exchange of information regarding those students. The bill also provides for temporary housing assistance between terms and requires students who are homeless to be given priority access to student housing facilities.

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 2 of this bill.

ANALYSIS

H.B. 1482 amends the Education Code to require an employee of a public institution of higher education and an employee of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) designated by the institution or the THECB, respectively, as a liaison officer for students who were in the conservatorship of the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) to also act as a liaison officer for current and incoming students who are homeless. The bill defines "students who are homeless" by reference to federal law and includes in the term students who reside in a student housing facility maintained by an institution during an academic term but who are homeless between academic terms. The bill requires each institution, to the extent allowed by state or federal law, to identify students who are homeless from information provided to the institution in admission or financial aid applications or other available resources.

H.B. 1482 sets out the following provisions relating to the duties of a liaison officer designated by an institution of higher education:

- requires the liaison officer to contact as necessary a person designated under certain federal law as a local educational agency liaison for homeless children and youths to facilitate the transition of students who are homeless and students who are or were in DFPS conservatorship from secondary to postsecondary education;

- includes students who are homeless among those to whom the liaison officer must provide information regarding support services and other resources available at the institution; and
- specifies that the information to be provided includes information about financial aid, on-campus and off-campus housing, food and meal programs, and counseling services.

The bill requires the THECB to adopt rules and establish policies and procedures to ensure that the liaison officer participates in a professional development program prescribed by certain federal law.

H.B. 1482 requires the liaison officer designated by the THECB to assist in coordinating college readiness and student success efforts relating to students who are homeless in addition to students who were in DFPS conservatorship. The bill requires the THECB to designate the liaison officer not later than January 1, 2022, and to establish policies and procedures to ensure that the liaison officer participates in a professional development program prescribed by certain federal law.

H.B. 1482 makes a student who is homeless and meets other applicable criteria eligible to receive certain assistance from an institution of higher education in locating temporary housing between academic terms. The bill extends that eligibility, both for such students and for applicable students who were in DFPS conservatorship, to a student who is enrolled full-time at the institution during the academic term for which the student requests the housing assistance. The bill requires an institution that maintains student housing facilities to give priority in the assignment of housing in those facilities to students who are homeless.

H.B. 1482 revises requirements relating to a certain memorandum of understanding regarding the exchange of information between the THECB and DFPS as follows:

- includes the Texas Education Agency (TEA) as a party to the memorandum;
- requires the agencies to enter into the memorandum not later than March 1, 2022;
- includes TEA evaluation of educational outcomes at institutions of higher education for students who are homeless as a purpose to be facilitated by the information exchange;
- adds a requirement for TEA to provide the THECB each year with demographic information regarding individual students who are homeless and who are enrolled at an institution of higher education;
- adds a requirement for the THECB, in a manner consistent with federal law, to provide TEA with aggregate information regarding educational outcomes of those students; and
- updates the scope of provisions authorizing the disclosure of demographic information regarding individual students to education research centers to include information regarding students who are homeless and information received by the THECB from TEA.

EFFECTIVE DATE

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