87R8537 CXP-D

By:  Beckley H.B. No. 1898

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to the exemption of tuition and laboratory fees at public institutions of higher education for certain emergency operators or dispatchers.

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

SECTION 1.  Subchapter D, Chapter 54, Education Code, is amended by adding Section 54.3533 to read as follows:

Sec. 54.3533.  EMERGENCY OPERATORS OR DISPATCHERS ENROLLED IN CERTAIN COURSES. (a) The governing board of an institution of higher education shall exempt from the payment of tuition and laboratory fees charged by the institution for courses relating to emergency telecommunications, criminal justice, or emergency medical services an undergraduate student who:

(1)  is employed as an emergency response operator or emergency services dispatcher by this state or by a political subdivision of this state;

(2)  is enrolled in a certificate or degree program relating to emergency telecommunications, criminal justice, or emergency medical services at the institution;

(3)  is making satisfactory academic progress toward the student's certificate or degree as determined by the institution; and

(4)  applies for the exemption at least one week before the last date of the institution's regular registration period for the applicable semester or other term.

(b)  Notwithstanding Subsection (a), a student may not receive an exemption under this section for any course if the student has previously attempted a number of semester credit hours for courses taken at any institution of higher education while classified as a resident student for tuition purposes in excess of the maximum number of those hours specified by Section 61.0595(a) as eligible for funding under the formulas established under Section 61.059.

(c)  Notwithstanding Subsection (a), the governing board of an institution of higher education may not provide exemptions under this section to students enrolled in a specific class in a number that exceeds 20 percent of the maximum student enrollment designated by the institution for that class.

(d)  An exemption provided under this section does not apply to deposits that may be required in the nature of security for the return or proper care of property loaned for the use of students.

(e)  The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board shall adopt:

(1)  rules governing the granting or denial of an exemption under this section, including rules relating to the determination of a student's eligibility for an exemption; and

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

(f)  If the legislature does not specifically appropriate funds to an institution of higher education in an amount sufficient to pay the institution's costs in complying with this section for a semester or other term, the governing board of the institution shall report to the Senate Finance Committee and the House Appropriations Committee the cost to the institution of complying with this section for that semester or other term.

SECTION 2.  (a) The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board shall adopt the rules required by Section 54.3533, Education Code, as added by this Act, as soon as practicable after the effective date of this Act.

(b)  Section 54.3533, Education Code, as added by this Act, applies beginning with tuition and laboratory fees charged for the 2021 fall semester. Tuition and laboratory fees charged for an academic period before that semester are covered by the law in effect immediately before the effective date of this Act, and the former law is continued in effect for that purpose.

SECTION 3.  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, 2021.