

By: Martinez, Canales, Muñoz, Jr., Lucio III,
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H.B. No. 695

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to the establishment of a public law school in the Rio Grande Valley.

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

SECTION 1. Subchapter C, Chapter 61, Education Code, is amended by adding Section 61.0905 to read as follows:

Sec. 61.0905. RIO GRANDE VALLEY SCHOOL OF LAW. (a) The governing board of a university system may establish and operate, as a professional school of the system, a school of law in Cameron County or Hidalgo County as the governing board considers appropriate.

(b) In administering the law school, the governing board may prescribe courses leading to customary degrees offered at other leading American schools of law and may award those degrees.

(c) The governing board may assign responsibility for the management of the law school to a general academic teaching institution in the university system.

(d) The governing board may accept and administer gifts and grants from any public or private person or entity for the use and benefit of the law school. Notwithstanding any other provision of this section, establishment of a law school under this section is subject to the availability of funding, either through appropriation or from another source.

(e) The governing board of a university system that intends

1 to establish a law school under this section shall notify the Texas
2 Higher Education Coordinating Board. If the coordinating board
3 receives notification under this subsection from more than one
4 governing board, the coordinating board shall determine which of
5 those governing boards may establish a law school under this
6 section. The coordinating board must base the determination on the
7 need for a law school in a geographic area, potential student
8 demand, available system resources, the feasibility of the specific
9 proposal of each system, and other criteria the coordinating board
10 considers appropriate.

11 (f) Before the governing board establishes a law school
12 under this section, the governing board shall request the
13 coordinating board to prepare a feasibility study to determine the
14 actions the system must take to obtain accreditation of the law
15 school. The coordinating board shall deliver a copy of the study to
16 the governing board and to the chair of each legislative standing
17 committee with jurisdiction over higher education.

18 SECTION 2. For the purposes of Section 61.0905, Education
19 Code, as added by this Act, no state funds may be appropriated for a
20 state fiscal biennium ending on or before August 31, 2027.

21 SECTION 3. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives
22 a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as
23 provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this
24 Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this
25 Act takes effect September 1, 2021.