

By: Powell

S.B. No. 384

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

1 AN ACT
2 relating to the exemption of tuition and laboratory fees at public
3 institutions of higher education for certain paramedics.

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

5 SECTION 1. The heading to Section 54.353, Education Code,
6 is amended to read as follows:

7 Sec. 54.353. FIREFIGHTERS OR PARAMEDICS ENROLLED IN FIRE
8 SCIENCE COURSES.

9 SECTION 2. Section 54.353, Education Code, is amended by
10 amending Subsections (a) and (f) and adding Subsection (e-1) to
11 read as follows:

12 (a) The governing board of an institution of higher
13 education shall exempt from the payment of tuition and laboratory
14 fees any student enrolled in one or more courses offered as part of
15 a fire science curriculum who:

16 (1) is employed as a firefighter or a paramedic by a
17 political subdivision of this state; or

18 (2) is currently, and has been for at least one year,
19 an active member of an organized volunteer fire department
20 participating in the Texas Emergency Services Retirement System or
21 a retirement system established under the Texas Local Fire Fighters
22 Retirement Act (Article 6243e, Vernon's Texas Civil Statutes) and
23 who holds:

24 (A) an Accredited Advanced level of

1 certification, or an equivalent successor certification, under the
2 State Firemen's and Fire Marshals' Association of Texas volunteer
3 certification program; or

4 (B) Phase V (Firefighter II) certification, or an
5 equivalent successor certification, under the Texas Commission on
6 Fire Protection's voluntary certification program under Section
7 [419.071](#), Government Code.

8 (e-1) Notwithstanding Subsection (a), the governing board
9 of an institution of higher education may, in accordance with Texas
10 Higher Education Coordinating Board rule, exclude from the
11 exemption under this section a course that is offered through
12 distance education.

13 (f) The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board shall
14 adopt:

15 (1) rules governing the granting or denial of an
16 exemption under this section, including rules:

17 (A) prescribing the educational attainment or
18 level of certification necessary to qualify for an exemption as a
19 paramedic;

20 (B) relating to the determination of a student's
21 eligibility for an exemption; and

22 (C) relating to the exclusion from the exemption
23 under Subsection (e-1) of a distance education course, including
24 prescribing the maximum number of distance education courses that
25 may be excluded from the exemption under that subsection; and

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

1 SECTION 3. (a) The Texas Higher Education Coordinating
2 Board shall adopt the rules required by Section 54.353(f),
3 Education Code, as amended by this Act, as soon as practicable after
4 the effective date of this Act.

5 (b) Section 54.353, Education Code, as amended by this Act,
6 applies beginning with tuition and laboratory fees charged for the
7 2021 fall semester. Tuition and laboratory fees charged for an
8 academic period before that semester are covered by the law in
9 effect immediately before the effective date of this Act, and the
10 former law is continued in effect for that purpose.

11 SECTION 4. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives
12 a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as
13 provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this
14 Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this
15 Act takes effect September 1, 2021.