

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 683
By: Cole
Higher Education
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The Association of Texas EMS Professionals notes that although in most Texas jurisdictions, paramedics working for a political subdivision are also employed as firefighters, this is not true in all jurisdictions. Firefighters are eligible for a tuition exemption for certain emergency preparedness courses offered at public institutions of higher education, but paramedics that are not employed as firefighters are not eligible for this tuition exemption. H.B. 683 seeks to address this issue by providing a similar tuition exemption for such courses to all paramedics.

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 1 of this bill.

ANALYSIS

H.B. 683 amends the Education Code to create an exemption from tuition and laboratory fees for a student who is employed as a paramedic by a political subdivision and is enrolled in one or more courses offered as part of an emergency medical services curriculum at a public institution of higher education. The exemption does not apply to certain security deposits or to additional tuition relating to repeated or excessive undergraduate or graduate hours, as applicable. The bill makes continuation of the exemption for a student contingent on the student's satisfactory academic progress, as determined by the institution for financial aid purposes. The bill authorizes an institution's governing board to exclude from the exemption certain courses offered exclusively through distance education. The bill requires the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to adopt rules governing the granting or denial of an exemption and a uniform listing of degree programs covered by the exemption. The bill's provisions apply beginning with tuition and fees charged for the 2023 fall semester.

EFFECTIVE DATE

On passage, or, if the bill does not receive the necessary vote, September 1, 2023.