

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 1323
By: Talarico
Higher Education
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

State law exempts or waives payment of tuition and fees at state universities for current or former foster youth. However, not all eligible foster youth enrolled in college utilize the tuition waivers. According to the Texas Institute for Child & Family Wellbeing, recipients of the tuition waiver are three times more likely to earn a bachelor's degree than their foster care peers who do not utilize the program. Advocates point to a lack of awareness and the arduous application process as reasons more students do not take advantage of this program. H.B. 1323 seeks to address these concerns by increasing outreach programs and by requiring informational materials regarding the tuition and fee waiver for current and former foster youth to be provided to each residential child-care facility, adoptive parents of children formerly in foster or residential care, and all school districts, charter schools, and private schools. The bill also requires the Department of Family and Protective Services and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to jointly design a streamlined eligibility determination and application process for the program.

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 this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

ANALYSIS

H.B. 1323 amends the Education Code to revise certain requirements relating to the outreach programs developed by the Texas Education Agency and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) that ensure certain students in the conservatorship of the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) and adopted students formerly in foster care or other residential care are aware of the availability of exemption from the payment of certain higher education tuition and fees. The bill specifies that the programs are required to provide informational materials regarding the tuition and fee exemptions to the following:

- each residential child-care facility;
- each public school district, open-enrollment charter school, and private school offering grade nine or above;
- each adoptive parent of a student in grade 9 through 12 who was formerly in foster or other residential care, if applicable; and
- each foster parent or relative or other designated caregiver for a student enrolled in grade 9 through 12, if applicable.

H.B. 1323 requires DFPS and the THECB to jointly design and implement a streamlined eligibility determination and application process for the tuition and fee exemptions that includes the following components:

- reduces data collection, data entry, and the copying and recopying of applications to decrease the administrative burden in determining exemption eligibility;
- includes a system allowing a student to apply for an exemption electronically through the DFPS website; and
- for an eligible student, provides for the automatic submission of required eligibility documentation by DFPS to the applicable institution of higher education.

EFFECTIVE DATE

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