

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
88R4022 CXP-D

S.B. 2240
By: LaMantia
Subcommittee on Higher Education
4/18/2023
As Filed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Rising university costs and fees have created challenges for low-income college students keen on saving money. Since textbooks can make up a notable portion of costs upfront, introducing innovative, cost-saving measures related to textbooks would provide financial relief for these students.

S.B. 2240 addresses the need for more innovation in textbook platforms by creating a pilot program to examine new approaches to bring cost savings to college students. By introducing a low-cost, digital program for textbooks and learning materials, S.B. 2240 intends to provide an alternative for low-income students to access the necessary educational resources. In addition, the program will award grants to lower-division institutions of higher education to provide financial assistance for the program's cost to eligible students.

Upon completion of the pilot program, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board shall deliver a report recommending that the program is either continued, expanded, or ended.

As proposed, S.B. 2240 amends current law relating to establishing a digital textbook and learning materials subscription pilot program.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in SECTION 2 of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Subchapter C, Chapter 61, Education Code, by adding Section 61.0667, as follows:

Sec. 61.0667. DIGITAL TEXTBOOK AND LEARNING MATERIALS SUBSCRIPTION PILOT PROGRAM. (a) Defines "digital textbook and learning materials subscription program" and "lower-division institution of higher education."

(b) Requires the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) to establish a pilot program under which THECB awards grants to participating lower-division institutions of higher education to provide financial assistance to eligible students for the cost of subscribing to the digital textbook and learning materials subscription program selected by THECB under Subsection (e).

(c) Requires THECB to select lower-division institutions of higher education to participate in the pilot program. Requires THECB, in selecting institutions, to the extent possible, to:

- (1) select institutions in both rural and urban areas of this state; and
- (2) prioritize institutions with large socially and economically disadvantaged and historically underrepresented student populations.

(d) Requires a participating lower-division institution of higher education to use grant funds awarded under this section to provide financial assistance to eligible students for all or part of the cost of subscribing to the digital textbook and learning materials subscription program selected by THECB under Subsection (e). Requires the participating institution to determine the eligibility criteria for a student to receive financial assistance under the pilot program and to prioritize providing financial assistance to economically disadvantaged students.

(e) Requires THECB to engage in a competitive bidding process to select the digital textbook and learning materials subscription to be used in the pilot program. Requires that the subscription selected by THECB provide 24-hour technical support services to subscribers.

(f) Requires THECB, not later than September 1, 2026, to prepare and deliver to the governor, the lieutenant governor, the speaker of the house of representatives, and the presiding officer of each legislative standing committee with primary jurisdiction over higher education a report that evaluates the effectiveness of the pilot program in improving student outcomes. Requires that the report include a recommendation regarding whether the pilot program should be continued, expanded, or terminated.

(g) Provides that this section expires September 1, 2027.

SECTION 2. (a) Requires THECB to adopt rules to administer the pilot program established under Section 61.0667, Education Code, as added by this Act, as soon as practicable after the effective date of this Act.

(b) Requires THECB and participating lower-division institutions of higher education to award initial grants under Section 61.0667, Education Code, as added by this Act, beginning with the 2024 spring semester

SECTION 3. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2023.