

By: Ashby

H.B. No. 2158

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to tuition and fee exemptions for firefighters enrolled in certain courses at public institutions of higher education.

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

SECTION 1. Section 54.353(a), Education Code, is amended to read as follows:

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

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

(2) is a member in good standing of a volunteer fire department that is registered with the Texas A&M Forest Service and responds to 9-1-1 emergency calls in a designated area [~~currently, and has been for at least one year, an active member of an organized volunteer fire department participating in the Texas Emergency Services Retirement System or a retirement system established under the Texas Local Fire Fighters Retirement Act (Article 6243c, Vernon's Texas Civil Statutes)~~] and who:

(A) attends at least 20 hours of annual training provided by the Texas State Association of Fire Fighters, the Texas Fire Marshals' Association, or the Texas Commission on Fire Protection;

1 (B) attends or provides support services for at
2 least 25 percent of the department's emergencies in a calendar
3 year; and

4 (C) holds:

5 (i) [~~(A)~~] an Accredited Advanced level of
6 certification, or an equivalent successor certification, under the
7 State Firefighters' [~~Firemen's~~] and Fire Marshals' Association of
8 Texas volunteer certification program; or

9 (ii) [~~(B)~~] Phase V (Firefighter II)
10 certification, or an equivalent successor certification, under the
11 Texas Commission on Fire Protection's voluntary certification
12 program under Section 419.071, Government Code.

13 SECTION 2. Section 54.353(a), Education Code, as amended by
14 this Act, applies beginning with tuition and laboratory fees
15 charged for the 2023 fall semester. Tuition and laboratory fees
16 charged for an academic period before that semester are covered by
17 the law in effect immediately before the effective date of this Act,
18 and the former law is continued in effect for that purpose.

19 SECTION 3. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives
20 a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as
21 provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this
22 Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this
23 Act takes effect September 1, 2023.