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| BILL ANALYSIS |

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| C.S.H.B. 4909 |
| By: Wilson |
| Higher Education |
| Committee Report (Substituted) |

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| **BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE**  Direct Admissions, administered through the My Texas Future website, is a unique tool that provides Texas students with a list of participating institutions of higher education that will accept them before they even begin the college application process. This is currently an opt-in initiative. The bill author has informed the committee that applying for college can be daunting; direct admissions has the potential to reduce time, boost confidence, increase transparency, and encourage Texans who might not otherwise consider college to take the next step and pursue postsecondary education. C.S.H.B. 4909 seeks to streamline the college admissions process by increasing access to the My Texas Future portal. |
| **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 2 of this bill. |
| **ANALYSIS**  **My Texas Future Portal**  C.S.H.B. 4909 amends the Education Code to require the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) to create, maintain, and administer a website portal titled "My Texas Future," through which a prospective postsecondary student may create a profile and account to access information regarding public institutions of higher education at which the student will be accepted for admission and financial aid awards at each institution that the student is eligible to receive. The bill requires the website portal to include the following:   * a link or direct submission portal to the electronic common admission application form adopted under state law; and * a list for each prospective student, based on the student's profile and personal and educational information, of:   + institutions of higher education at which the student will be accepted for admission;   + to the greatest extent possible, financial aid awards that the student is eligible to receive; and   + the information to assist students in assessing the value of postsecondary credentials.   C.S.H.B. 4909 authorizes the THECB to share a student's contact information in the website portal with an institution of higher education unless the student opts out of the information sharing. The bill requires the THECB to ensure that a person who creates an account on the portal may opt out of sharing their contact information. The bill establishes that information obtained from a person through the website portal or shared with an institution of higher education is confidential and not subject to disclosure under state public information law and may only be released as provided by the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974. The bill authorizes the THECB to withhold such prohibited information from being disclosed under these bill provisions without requesting a decision from the attorney general under state law.  **Link to My Texas Future Portal**  C.S.H.B. 4909 requires each institution of higher education to prominently post on the institution's web page dedicated to student admissions a link to the My Texas Future portal or a successor website and notice to prospective students that a person may apply to the institution of higher education using the electronic common admission application form through the portal, the ApplyTexas website, or another website established by the THECB.  **My Texas Future Portal Participation for High School Graduation**  C.S.H.B. 4909 requires a student enrolled in a public school district or open-enrollment charter school to elect to do either of the following in order to graduate from high school:   * create an account and profile in the My Texas Future portal; or * opt out of creating an account and profile in the My Texas Future portal.   Accordingly, the bill authorizes a student to opt out of creating an account and profile in the My Texas Future portal by doing one of the following:   * submitting a form signed by the student's parent or other person standing in parental relation indicating that the parent or other person authorizes the student to decline to participate in the portal; * submitting such a form signed by the student if the student is 18 years of age or older or the student's disabilities of minority have been applicably removed; or * obtaining authorization in writing from a school counselor for the student to decline to participate in the portal.   C.S.H.B. 4909 requires each district or charter school to use a form adopted by THECB rule for purposes of authorizing a student to opt out of the My Texas Future portal that must do the following:   * provide the student or the student's parent or other person standing in parental relation, as applicable, the opportunity to decline to participate in the portal as provided by the bill; and * be made available in English, Spanish, and any other language spoken by a majority of the students enrolled in a bilingual education or special language program in the district or charter school.   C.S.H.B. 4909 requires the district or charter school in which the student is enrolled, on a student's earning of at least three high school course credits but not later than the end of the student's ninth grade fall semester and at the beginning of each subsequent school year, to notify the student's parent or other person standing in parental relation regarding the following relating to the My Texas Future portal in a manner prescribed by THECB rule:   * the graduation requirement for a student to either create an account and profile in the portal or opt out of doing so; * the ability of a student or the student's parent or other person standing in parental relation to revise the student's profile created in the portal; and * the ability of a student or the student's parent or other person standing in parental relation to opt out of an applicable service in the portal.   C.S.H.B. 4909 requires the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and the THECB to jointly prepare and post on TEA's and the THECB's respective websites a publication that includes the information required to be provided in the notification in a form that enables a district or charter school to reproduce the publication for distribution. The bill requires TEA and each district and charter school to submit to the THECB data necessary for the THECB to administer the bill's provisions regarding the portal participation requirement. The bill authorizes the THECB, in consultation with TEA, to adopt rules necessary to implement those provisions. The bill expands the eligibility requirements for an otherwise qualifying person to receive a high school diploma by requiring a person to comply with the bill's provisions. The bill's provisions relating to the graduation requirement apply beginning with the 2026-2027 school year. |
| **EFFECTIVE DATE**  On passage, or, if the bill does not receive the necessary vote, September 1, 2025. |
| **COMPARISON OF INTRODUCED AND SUBSTITUTE**  While C.S.H.B. 4909 may differ from the introduced in minor or nonsubstantive ways, the following summarizes the substantial differences between the introduced and committee substitute versions of the bill.  The substitute replaces the introduced version's requirement for the THECB to create, maintain, and administer the My Texas Future electronic platform and submission portal to facilitate the awareness and application of students into institutions of higher education with a requirement for the THECB to create, maintain, and administer My Texas Future as a website portal through which a prospective postsecondary student may create a profile and account to access information regarding institutions of higher education at which the student will be accepted for admission and financial aid awards at each institution that the student is eligible to receive. Accordingly, the substitute revises and clarifies the provisions of the introduced relating to such a portal, by doing the following:   * omitting any successor electronic platform, as in the introduced, from the requirement for the portal to include certain information; * replacing the requirement for the portal to list institution of higher education to which a student may be directly admitted, as in the introduced, with a requirement for the portal to include a list of institutions of higher education at which the student will be accepted for admission; * replacing the requirement for each student to elect whether to opt-in to allowing the THECB to share the student's data and education records with institutions of higher education to allow the student to participate in the direct admissions program provided by the introduced with a graduation requirement for a student enrolled in a district or charter school to elect to either:   + create an account and profile in the My Texas Future portal; or   + opt out of creating an account and profile in the My Texas Future portal; * with respect to the required annual notification by a district or charter school on a student's earning at least three high school course credits but not later than the end of a student's ninth grade fall semester:   + omitting as part of the notification the option to create or update annually a profile and account in My Texas Future, which appears in the introduced; and   + removing the specification that the district or charter school make that notification as part of the high school registration process, as specified in the introduced; and * omitting the specification that information that relates to a current, former, or prospective applicant or student of an educational institution and that is obtained, received, or held by the THECB for the purpose of administering the portal or otherwise providing assistance with access to postsecondary education is confidential and not subject to disclosure under state public information law, as in the introduced, and instead establishing that information obtained from a person through the website portal is not subject to disclosure under state public information law.   The substitute revises the requirement of the introduced for a district and charter school to use a form adopted by the THECB to allow a student to opt out of the bill's portal by specifying that the form is adopted by THECB rule and omitting that the form is adopted in consultation with TEA. The substitute omits the provision in the introduced that defines "institution of higher education" by reference to provisions governing the THECB and the provision from the introduced providing that the bill's provisions relating to the creation of the portal applied beginning with the 2025-2026 academic year.  The substitute also revises the requirement of the introduced for an institution of higher education to prominently post on the institution's web page dedicated to student admissions a notice regarding the portal by specifying that the notice is for prospective students and including that the prospective student may also apply to the institution using the electronic common admission application form through another website established by the THECB, in addition to the My Texas Future portal and the ApplyTexas website. |