

BILL ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 1527
By: Alders
Higher Education
Committee Report (Substituted)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Under current law, firefighters and peace officers are exempted from tuition for certain education classes at public institutions of higher education. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board is tasked with creating uniform lists of the exempted degree programs. While these lists provide firefighters with a broader range of undergraduate and graduate programs including public administration, exempted programs for peace officers are largely limited to undergraduate programs in criminal justice. C.S.H.B. 1527 seeks to ensure more parity between the exempted programs for firefighters and peace officers by specifying certain types of programs that are considered a law enforcement-related degree program for purposes of the peace officer exemption, with a broad range of topics pertaining to peace officer service, and by removing the specification that the peace officer exemption is limited to undergraduate students.

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

C.S.H.B. 1527 amends the Education Code to broaden the scope of the tuition and fee exemption for peace officers enrolled in a criminal justice or law enforcement-related degree program at a public institution of higher education by doing the following:

- changing it from an exemption from payment of tuition and laboratory fees charged to an eligible student for a criminal justice or law enforcement course or courses to an exemption from payment of tuition and laboratory fees for an eligible student enrolled in one or more courses offered as part of a law enforcement-related degree program;
- removing the specification that the exemption applies to undergraduate students;
- conditioning eligibility for the exemption on the student holding a basic peace officer proficiency certificate issued by the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement (TCOLE); and
- specifying that a law enforcement-related degree program includes a program in any of the following subject areas:
 - criminal justice;
 - public administration and public affairs;
 - emergency management;
 - youth and community studies;
 - law;

- Spanish or any other foreign language commonly spoken in Texas;
- accounting, including forensic accounting;
- psychology;
- social work, including clinical social work;
- nursing;
- chemistry;
- biology;
- forensic science; or
- computer science, data science, and cybersecurity.

C.S.H.B. 1527 applies beginning with tuition and other fees charged for the 2025 fall semester. Tuition and other fees charged for an academic period before that semester are governed by the law in effect immediately before the bill's effective date, and the former law is continued in effect for that purpose.

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. 1527 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.

Both versions of the bill change the nature of the tuition and fee exemption for peace officers enrolled in a criminal justice or law enforcement-related degree program at a public institution of higher education. However, whereas the introduced required a student meeting the eligibility criteria to be exempted from the payment of tuition and laboratory fees charged by the institution for any course or courses, the substitute requires an eligible student enrolled in one or more courses offered as part of a law enforcement-related degree program to be exempted from the payment of tuition and laboratory fees.

While both the introduced and the substitute specify certain types of program that are considered law enforcement-related degree programs for purposes of the exemption, only the introduced included programs in political science and business administration as applicable programs, whereas the substitute does not.

The substitute includes a provision absent from the introduced conditioning eligibility for the exemption on the student holding a basic peace officer proficiency certificate issued by TCOLE.