

BILL ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 1705
By: Shofner
Higher Education
Committee Report (Substituted)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The bill author has informed the committee that in 2019, the first Trump administration removed the "regional accreditor" classification of higher education institutions, which allowed colleges and universities to switch to any nationally recognized accreditor under federal law. However, the bill author also informed the committee that state law currently ties the definition of certain colleges and universities to a specific accreditor—the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. C.S.H.B. 1705 seeks to address this issue by aligning Texas with federal law and updating the definition of "recognized accrediting agency."

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

C.S.H.B. 1705 amends the Education Code to remove the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools from the definition of "recognized accrediting agency" for purposes of statutory provisions relating to the accreditation of public postsecondary educational institutions. Accordingly, the bill does the following:

- replaces specific references to the "Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools" with "recognized accrediting agency" for purposes of statutory provisions relating to the accreditation of a public junior college and the completion of remaining semester credit hours needed for a career and technical education program of study curriculum by a student who transfers to a public junior college, public state college, or public technical institute; and
- replaces specific references to the "Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges" with "recognized accrediting agency" for purposes of statutory provisions relating to the accreditation of Texas Woman's University at Dallas and Texas Woman's University at Houston.

C.S.H.B. 1705 expands the duties of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) by establishing that the THECB is charged with the duty to take an active part in promoting quality public higher education throughout Texas by adopting rules or taking other action necessary to ensure that each public institution of higher education is properly accredited as required to participate in the Federal Pell Grant program and other federal student financial assistance programs.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2025.

COMPARISON OF INTRODUCED AND SUBSTITUTE

While C.S.H.B. 1705 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 includes a provision absent from the introduced expanding the duties of the THECB by establishing that the THECB is charged with the duty to take an active part in promoting quality public higher education throughout Texas by adopting rules or taking other action necessary to ensure that each public institution of higher education is properly accredited to participate in certain federal student financial assistance programs.