

BILL ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 1784
By: Bucy
Higher Education
Committee Report (Substituted)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

According to the National Center for Homeless Education, Texas is home to approximately 10 percent of the country's homeless youth and children. The bill author has informed the committee that even if homeless youth are able to attend post-secondary education, they often struggle with acquiring housing. According to the 2019-2020 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study, eight percent of undergraduates and five percent of graduate students are experiencing homelessness. The bill author has also informed the committee that university and college housing typically shut down over winter, spring, and summer breaks, leaving homeless students with no backup housing. However, under current law, homeless students in kindergarten through 12th grade receive liaison services in schools, which help identify homeless youth, keep those students enrolled in school, ensure those students receive necessary services, and provide referrals to additional care as needed. C.S.H.B. 1784 seeks to provide for measures that assist individuals who are homeless and enrolled at an institution of higher education, including granting them access to a liaison officer.

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. 1784 amends the Education Code, in provisions requiring certain measures to assist students enrolled at public institutions of higher education who are or were in conservatorship with the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS), to provide for measures that also assist students who are homeless. Accordingly, the bill requires an institution of higher education to designate at least one employee of the institution to act as a liaison officer for current and incoming students who are homeless and requires the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), not later than January 1, 2026, to designate at least one employee of the THECB to act as a liaison officer at institutions of higher education for current and incoming students who are homeless. The THECB liaison officer must assist in coordinating college readiness and student success efforts relating to students who are homeless, and each institution of higher education, to the extent allowed by state or federal law, must identify students who are homeless from information provided to the institution in admission or financial aid applications or other available resources.

C.S.H.B. 1784 authorizes the THECB to do the following:

- adopt rules and establish policies and procedures to ensure that a liaison officer designated by an institution of higher education to serve students who are homeless

participates in a professional development program under applicable federal law regarding grants for state and local activities for the education of homeless children and youth; and

- establish policies and procedures to ensure that a liaison officer designated by the THECB to serve students who are homeless participates in such a professional development program.

C.S.H.B. 1784 provides for the following with respect to the duties of a liaison officer designated by an institution of higher education to assist students who are or were in DFPS conservatorship and to assist students who are homeless:

- the officer must contact a local educational agency liaison for homeless children and youths designated under federal law as necessary to facilitate the transition of students who are or were in DFPS conservatorship and students who are homeless from secondary to postsecondary education; and
- the officer must provide to students who are homeless the same information that must be provided under current law to students who are or were in DFPS conservatorship regarding support services and other resources available to the students at the institution and any other relevant information to assist the students.

The bill further specifies that the information regarding support services and other resources includes information about financial aid, on-campus and off-campus housing, food and meal programs, and counseling services.

C.S.H.B. 1784 requires an institution of higher education that maintains student housing facilities to give priority in the assignment of housing in those facilities to students who are homeless. With respect to eligibility criteria for receiving assistance in locating temporary housing between academic terms from an institution of higher education, the bill does the following:

- makes the criteria that are applicable under current law to a student who has been under DFPS conservatorship also applicable to a student who is homeless; and
- adds, as an alternative to the requirement in such criteria that a student requesting assistance for temporary housing be enrolled full-time at the institution during the academic term immediately preceding the period for which the student requests the housing assistance, that a student must be enrolled full-time at the institution during the academic term for which the student requests the housing assistance.

C.S.H.B. 1784 revises the provision in current law requiring that DFPS and the THECB enter into a memorandum of understanding regarding the exchange of information to facilitate the evaluation by DFPS of educational outcomes of students at institutions of higher education who were in the conservatorship of DFPS to include the exchange of information as appropriate to facilitate the provision of requisite demographic information to the THECB by the Texas Education Agency (TEA). Accordingly, the bill requires the THECB, TEA, and DFPS, not later than March 1, 2026, to enter into a memorandum of understanding regarding the applicable exchange of information as required by this revised provision. The memorandum must require that TEA provide the THECB each year with demographic information regarding individual students who are homeless and who are enrolled at an institution of higher education.

C.S.H.B. 1784 updates a provision in current law that authorizes the DFPS to authorize the THECB to provide education research centers with applicable demographic information regarding individual students as appropriate to allow the centers to perform additional analysis regarding educational outcomes of students who were in the conservatorship of DFPS to provide that, as follows:

- TEA may also authorize the THECB to provide education research centers with the applicable demographic information for that purpose for students who are homeless; and
- TEA must approve any use of such information regarding individual students under the authorization.

C.S.H.B. 1784 establishes that its provisions regarding the memorandum of understanding, as revised by the bill, may not be construed to require TEA or the THECB to collect or maintain additional information regarding students who are homeless.

C.S.H.B. 1784 defines "students who are homeless" as students under 25 years of age who are considered "homeless children and youths" under specified federal law and includes students who have been verified by an institution of higher education for the bill's purposes as either of the following:

- having been a homeless child or youth at any time during the 24 months immediately preceding the student's enrollment at the institution; or
- experiencing homelessness at any time while enrolled at the institution.

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. 1784 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 definition of "students who are homeless," which had the meaning assigned to the term "homeless children and youths" under specified federal law and included in the term students who reside in a student housing facility maintained by an institution of higher education during an academic term but who are homeless between academic terms, with the substitute's version of that term, defined as students under 25 years of age who are considered "homeless children and youths" under that federal law and includes students who have been verified by an institution of higher education for the bill's purposes as either of the following:

- having been a homeless child or youth at any time during the 24 months immediately preceding the student's enrollment at the institution; or
- experiencing homelessness at any time while enrolled at the institution.

The substitute replaces the introduced version's requirement for the THECB to adopt rules and establish policies and procedures to ensure that a liaison officer designated by an institution of higher education or by the THECB to serve students who are homeless participates in a professional development program under applicable federal law regarding grants for state and local activities for the education of homeless children and youth with an authorization for the THECB to do so.

With respect to the provision in current law requiring that DFPS and the THECB enter into a memorandum of understanding regarding the exchange of information, the introduced required the exchange of information to facilitate TEA's evaluation of education outcomes at institutions of higher education of students who are homeless, which the substitute does not require. The substitute instead, with respect to that provision, requires the exchange of information to facilitate the provision of requisite demographic information to the THECB by TEA. The substitute omits provisions from the introduced that did the following:

- required the THECB to provide TEA with aggregate information regarding educational outcomes of students for whom the THECB received applicable demographic information from TEA; and
- specified that the aggregate information includes information relating to student academic achievement, graduation rates, attendance, and other educational outcomes as determined by the THECB and DFPS to include other educational outcomes as determined by TEA.