

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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H.B. 2081
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Education K-16
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Engrossed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Comprehensive Transition and Postsecondary (CTP) programs approved by the U.S. Department of Education are designed to support students with intellectual and developmental disabilities who want to continue education in academic and career fields to gain skills for employment. According to the office of Federal Student Aid within the department, there are only 4 CTP programs in Texas, whereas Ohio has 12 programs, Florida has 22 programs, and Tennessee has 8 programs. Historically, these institutions have had difficulty funding these students who need greater resources than students without disabilities. But a college education has proven that these individuals greatly benefit from attending an institution of higher education.

Research has shown that students with intellectual and developmental disabilities are twice as likely to be employed and achieve higher levels of independent living. They are also less likely to rely on supplemental security income and can earn \$400 per month more than their noncollege-educated peers. These students require a program that meets their individual needs, yet challenges them to become independent and productive citizens.

H.B. 2081 establishes the Building Better Futures Program to provide educational and occupational skills training for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities in higher education. For administration of this program, a competitive application process may be created for awarding of funds to participating institutions. This bill provides a unique opportunity for students to gain the necessary skills and education to find gainful employment and independence.

H.B. 2081 amends current law relating to the establishment of the Building Better Futures Program to support educational and occupational skills training opportunities and support services for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities at public and private institutions of higher education.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in SECTION 1 (Section 61.572, Education Code) of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Chapter 61, Education Code, by adding Subchapter J-2, as follows:

SUBCHAPTER J-2. BUILDING BETTER FUTURES PROGRAM

Sec. 61.571. PROGRAM PURPOSE. Provides that the purpose of the Building Better Futures Program is to facilitate the delivery by institutions of higher education and private or independent institutions of higher education of educational and occupational skills training opportunities and support services to students with intellectual and developmental disabilities in an inclusive and age-appropriate environment.

Sec. 61.572. ADMINISTRATION; RULES. (a) Requires the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) to administer the Building Better Futures Program and adopt any rules necessary to implement the program or this subchapter.

(b) Authorizes THECB to develop a competitive application process for the award of funds to eligible institutions under the Building Better Futures Program.

(c) Provides that a program or course offered under the Building Better Futures Program is exempt from the requirements of Sections 61.0512 (Board Approval of Academic Programs) and 61.822 (Transfer of Credits; Core Curriculum).

Sec. 61.573. INSTITUTION ELIGIBILITY. (a) Requires an institution of higher education or private or independent institution of higher education, to be eligible to participate in the program, to fulfill certain requirements.

(b) Requires THECB to establish criteria to ensure that each eligible institution that has requested but not yet received approval from the United States Department of Education for the institution's comprehensive transition and postsecondary program obtains that approval not later than the third anniversary of the date the institution is initially selected by THECB for participation in the Building Better Futures Program.

Sec. 61.574. STUDENT ELIGIBILITY. (a) Requires an applicant, to be eligible to participate in the Building Better Futures Program, to fulfill certain requirements.

(b) Requires an applicant who is a lawful permanent resident of the United States to submit with the applicant's application a copy of the applicant's lawful permanent resident form.

(c) Authorizes an eligible institution to require an applicant or the applicant's parent or guardian to provide proof of residency, through certain documentation.

(d) Authorizes an applicant who is not a resident of this state to participate in the Building Better Futures Program at an eligible institution only if the applicant is otherwise eligible under this section and the institution has an opening available in the Building Better Futures Program after all other eligible applicants are admitted.

Sec. 61.575. TRANSFERABILITY. Prohibits semester credit hours or the equivalent completed through the Building Better Futures Program from being transferred to an associate or baccalaureate degree program.

Sec. 61.576. AWARD OF MONEY. Provides that THECB is authorized to award money under the Building Better Futures Program only to eligible institutions to be used by the institutions to facilitate the delivery of educational and occupational skills training opportunities and support services to students participating in the program.

Sec. 61.577. FUNDING. Authorizes THECB to use any available revenue, including legislative appropriations, and to solicit and accept gifts, grants, and donations from a public or private source for the purposes of this subchapter.

SECTION 2. Requires THECB to adopt rules to administer Subchapter J-2, Chapter 61 (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board), Education Code, as added by this Act, as soon as practicable after the effective date of this Act.

SECTION 3. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2025.