

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 2081
By: Bucy
Higher Education
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

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. The bill author has informed the committee that a small percentage of students with intellectual and developmental disabilities are employed in competitive jobs in Texas and that students who enroll in a CTP program can be gainfully employed while participating in the program and maintain their job after they leave the program. H.B. 2081 seeks to facilitate the delivery of educational and occupational skills training to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities through CTP programs at institutions of higher education by providing for the administration of the building better futures program.

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 1 of this bill.

ANALYSIS

H.B. 2081 amends the Education Code to require the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) to administer the building better futures program for the purpose of facilitating the delivery by public, private, and 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.

H.B. 2081 requires the THECB to adopt any rules necessary to implement the program as soon as practicable after the bill's effective date and authorizes the THECB to develop a competitive application process for the award of funds to eligible institutions under the program. The bill exempts a program or course offered under the program from requirements relating to THECB approval of academic programs, the transfer of credits, and a THECB-recommended core curriculum.

H.B. 2081 requires an institution of higher education to meet the following criteria to be eligible to participate in the program:

- be approved by or awaiting approval from the U.S. Department of Education to offer a comprehensive transition and postsecondary program for students with intellectual or developmental disabilities;
- develop and implement a selective admissions process to select eligible students for admission to the institution's comprehensive transition and postsecondary program; and
- award a certificate to each student who successfully completes the program at the institution.

The bill requires the THECB to establish criteria to ensure that each eligible institution that has requested but not yet received approval from the U.S. 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 the THECB for participation in the program.

H.B. 2081 requires a student applicant to meet the following criteria to be eligible to participate in the program:

- apply for admission to a comprehensive transition and postsecondary program, or a program that is awaiting approval from the U.S. Department of Education as such a program, at an eligible institution;
- be a citizen or a lawful permanent resident of the United States;
- be a Texas resident as determined for tuition purposes, except as otherwise provided by the bill;
- have an intellectual or developmental disability diagnosed by an individual qualified by license or statute to make such a diagnosis;
- be able and willing to learn and participate in an inclusive classroom and work setting; and
- not be a danger to the applicant's self or others, as determined by the accepting institution.

The bill requires an applicant to submit a copy of their lawful permanent resident form with the application, if applicable, and authorizes an eligible institution to require an applicant or the applicant's parent or guardian to provide proof of residency through one of the documents specified by the bill. The bill authorizes an applicant who is not a Texas resident to participate in the program at an eligible institution only if the applicant is otherwise eligible and the institution has an opening available in the program after all other eligible applicants are admitted.

H.B. 2081 prohibits semester credit hours or the equivalent completed through the program from being transferred to an associate or baccalaureate degree program. The bill authorizes the THECB to award money under the program only to eligible institutions to be used by those institutions for the program's established purpose and authorizes the 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 the program.

EFFECTIVE DATE

On passage, or, if the bill does not receive the necessary vote, September 1, 2025.