

BILL ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 2768
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Delivery of Government Efficiency
Committee Report (Substituted)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The demand for skilled information technology (IT) professionals continues to grow in Texas. According to CompTIA, the state is projected to experience a 28 percent increase in tech occupation growth over the next decade, which is third highest in the nation. However, the bill author has informed the committee that Texas currently faces a shortage of qualified IT workers, which often creates challenges in maintaining and advancing the state's technological infrastructure and may be attributed to the bachelor's degree requirement for many state IT jobs. This requirement could pose an employment barrier for skilled workers who have gained practical experience and technical training through apprenticeship programs and associate degree coursework. Despite the critical roles that public junior colleges and technical institutes play in workforce development, Texas lacks a standardized state-recognized IT apprenticeship credential, which may hamstring the state's efforts to address IT demands within state agencies and public institutions that rely on secure and efficient information systems. C.S.H.B. 2768 seeks to address workforce shortages in Texas' state information resources sector by establishing an alternative pathway to state IT jobs through a state information technology apprenticeship credential program, which could help bridge the skills gap by providing students with hands-on experience, industry-relevant training, and a direct pathway to employment in state IT roles.

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. 2768 amends the Government Code to authorize a state agency to enter into an agreement under applicable state law with a public junior college district or a public technical institute, as those terms are defined under the Higher Education Coordinating Act of 1965, to offer a program leading to a state information technology apprenticeship credential to address shortages in the state information resources workforce. The bill requires the program to meet the following criteria:

- be approved by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in accordance with state law;
- develop the knowledge and skills necessary for a journey-level or senior-level information technology position in a state agency; and
- include a one-year apprenticeship with a relevant state agency, an organization working on a major information resources project, or a regional network security center established by the Department of Information Resources (DIR).

C.S.H.B. 2768 authorizes an apprenticeship under the program to be one of the following:

- an apprenticeship program registered with the U.S. Department of Labor; or
- an industry-recognized apprenticeship program offered by a public junior college or public technical institute that does the following:
 - adheres to academic and workforce standards required by industry; and
 - provides for flexibility in course design and implementation, including flexibility regarding the number of hours of classroom instruction and on-the-job training required, competencies required for credentialing, and goals for the program, as determined by the employer partner and faculty of the institution.

C.S.H.B. 2768 requires the executive director of DIR to update DIR's intra-agency career ladder program to ensure that an associate degree together with a credential awarded under the state information technology apprenticeship credential program may be substituted for a four-year baccalaureate degree. The bill requires the classification officer in the State Auditor's Office to review the state's position classification plan to determine whether an associate degree together with such an awarded credential may be substituted for a four-year baccalaureate degree and revise relevant job descriptions accordingly. The bill authorizes a state agency, if the program is not fully funded through tuition and other money available to the public junior college district or public technical institute for that purpose, to do the following:

- use any money available to the agency for the purpose of offering the program; and
- solicit and accept gifts, grants, and donations from any public or private source for the purpose of offering the program.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2025.

COMPARISON OF INTRODUCED AND SUBSTITUTE

While C.S.H.B. 2768 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 the following provisions, which were absent from the introduced:

- the authorization for an apprenticeship under the program to be an apprenticeship program registered with the U.S. Department of Labor or an industry-recognized apprenticeship program offered by a public junior college or public technical institute that meets certain standards; and
- the authorization for a state agency to take certain actions if the program is not fully funded through tuition and other money available to the public junior college district or public technical institute.

While both the substitute and introduced establish that "public technical institute" has the meaning assigned by the Higher Education Coordinating Act of 1965, the substitute establishes that "public junior college" also has the meaning assigned by that act, whereas the introduced did not do so.