

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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S.B. 1716
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AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Students who complete a nontraditional secondary education—such as homeschooling—often face disadvantages when applying to public colleges and universities in Texas. These challenges include inequitable access to automatic admission and state financial aid programs, even when homeschool students demonstrate strong academic ability.

In the 88th Legislature, the passage of H.B. 3993, authored by Representative Paul and passed with bipartisan support, was a key step toward addressing these issues. That legislation allowed homeschool and other nontraditional students to be considered for automatic admission based on standardized test scores. However, it relied on a flawed calculation method that unintentionally raised the bar significantly higher for homeschool applicants compared to their peers. For example, homeschoolers needed perfect or near-perfect SAT scores to gain admission under the same class rank thresholds available to traditional students.

Additionally, while current statute includes financial aid programs for most Texas students, many homeschool graduates are either excluded or face ambiguous eligibility. There remains a pressing need to align access for nontraditional students with that of their peers.

As proposed, S.B. 1716 amends current law relating to measures to support the enrollment of students with a nontraditional secondary education at public institutions of higher education, including eligibility for certain student financial assistance programs.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Section 51.9241, Education Code, by amending Subsection (d) and adding Subsection (e), as follows:

(d) Requires an institution of higher education, if the institution, in its undergraduate admission review process, sorts applicants by high school graduating class rank, to assign a class rank to any applicant who presents evidence that the applicant has successfully completed a nontraditional secondary education that does not include a high school graduating class ranking by:

(1) calculating for each class rank of other applicants to the institution the median score on each college entrance examination the institution considers in admissions; and

(2) assigning to the applicant the highest class rank for which the applicant's score on a college entrance examination the institution considers in admissions is at least equal to the median score for that class rank calculated under Subdivision (1).

Deletes existing text requiring an institution of higher education, if the institution, in its undergraduate admission review process, sorts applicants by high school graduating class rank, to place any applicant who presents evidence that the applicant has successfully completed a nontraditional secondary education that does not include a high school graduating class ranking at the average high school graduating class rank of undergraduate applicants to the institution who have equivalent standardized testing scores as the applicant.

(e) Requires an institution of higher education to which Subsection (d) applies to post on the institution's Internet website the median score on each college entrance examination the institution considers in admissions calculated for each class rank under Subsection (d)(1) for the preceding admissions cycle.

SECTION 2. Amends Section 56.013, Education Code, as follows:

Sec. 56.013. INFORMATION REGARDING FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FUNDED FROM DESIGNATED TUITION. Requires the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) to post on THECB's Internet website and disseminate to each public or accredited private high school in this state information regarding the financial assistance available under Subchapter B (Financial Assistance Funded From Designated Tuition) and to include information designed to educate high school students and the parents of those students on available opportunities and required preparation with respect to institutions of higher education.

SECTION 3. Amends Section 56.304(a), Education Code, as follows:

(a) Requires a person who graduated from high school before May 1, 2013, to be eligible initially for a Toward Excellence, Access, & Success (TEXAS) grant, to meet certain academic requirements, including be a graduate of a public or accredited private high school, or a graduate who presents evidence of successful completion of a nontraditional secondary education, as defined by Section 51.9241 (Admission of Student with Nontraditional Secondary Education), in this state who graduated not earlier than the 1998-1999 school year and who completed the recommended or advanced high school curriculum established under Section 28.002 (Required Curriculum) or 28.025 (High School Diploma and Certificate; Academic Achievement Record) or its equivalent.

SECTION 4. Amends Section 56.3041(a), Education Code, to make a conforming change.

SECTION 5. Amends Sections 56.308(a) and (d), Education Code, as follows:

(a) Makes a conforming change to this subsection.

(d) Provides that, in addition to the eligibility requirements of Section 56.304 (Initial Eligibility for Grant), a person who graduated from an accredited private high school or who presents evidence of successful completion of a nontraditional secondary education, as defined by Section 51.9241, is eligible to receive a grant under Subchapter M (Toward Excellence, Access, & Success (Texas) Grant Program) only if the student's official transcript or diploma includes the information required as provided by certain provisions of Section 56.308 (Notification of Program; Responsibilities of School Districts).

SECTION 6. Amends Section 56.484, Education Code, as follows:

Sec. 56.484. INITIAL ELIGIBILITY FOR SCHOLARSHIP. (a) Creates this subsection from existing text. Requires a student, to be eligible for a scholarship under Subchapter R (Scholarships for Students Graduating), to:

(1) have graduated from a public or accredited private high school, or be a graduate who presents evidence of successful completion of a nontraditional secondary education, as defined by Section 51.9241, in this state while ranked in the top 10 percent or as the valedictorian of the

student's graduating class, subject to Section 56.487(b) (relating to authorizing THECB to permit a student to establish initial eligibility based on the student's class rank at the end of the student's seventh semester in high school); and

(2)-(7) makes no changes to these subdivisions.

(b) Requires that the class rank of a student who presents evidence of successful completion of a nontraditional secondary education, for purposes of Subsection (a)(1), be calculated in the manner provided by Section 51.9241(d)(1).

SECTION 7. Provides that the changes in law made by this Act to Section 51.9241, Education Code, apply beginning with admissions to a public institution of higher education for the 2026 fall semester. Provides that admissions to a public institution of higher education for a term or semester before the 2026 fall semester are governed by the law in effect immediately before the effective date of this Act, and the former law is continued in effect for that purpose.

SECTION 8. Provides that the changes in law made by this Act to Chapter 56 (Student Financial Assistance), Education Code, apply beginning with student financial assistance awarded by a public institution of higher education for the 2026 fall semester. Provides that student financial assistance awarded by a public institution of higher education for a term or semester before the 2026 fall semester is governed by the law in effect immediately before the effective date of this Act, and the former law is continued in effect for that purpose.

SECTION 9. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2025.