

BILL ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 2030
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Higher Education
Committee Report (Substituted)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

There have been calls to improve postsecondary educational outcomes for low-income students in Texas by supporting regional postsecondary education collaboratives that focus on supporting low-income students or have a demonstrated connection to targeted workforce fields. C.S.H.B. 2030 establishes a competitive grant program for regional postsecondary education collaboratives to be administered and implemented by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

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

C.S.H.B. 2030 amends the Education Code to require the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) to establish and administer a competitive grant program under which the THECB awards grants to eligible regional postsecondary education collaboratives, defined by the bill as a collaboration between stakeholders in education, to improve educational outcomes for low-income students, defined by the bill as students who are eligible to receive a grant under the federal Pell Grant program or who have equivalent need, as determined by THECB rule.

C.S.H.B. 2030 requires the THECB, in awarding grants under the program, to give priority to eligible regional postsecondary education collaboratives that focus on supporting low-income students or that have a demonstrated connection to targeted workforce fields, as determined by the THECB. The bill makes a collaborative that meets the following criteria eligible to receive a grant:

- includes at least one school district and public junior college;
- raises a minimum amount of funding from other sources for the collaborative's costs, as established by THECB rule;
- develops and submits to the THECB a plan detailing how the collaborative would use program grant funds in a manner permitted by the bill;
- builds partnerships committed to changing postsecondary education systems and improving postsecondary educational outcomes through the use of data, mutual accountability, and engagement between a student and the student's community;
- measures the collaborative's success by achievement of increasing postsecondary enrollment and completion at a public, private, or independent institution of higher education and career entry for all students the collaborative assists;

- provides personalized outreach to students and parents or caregivers;
- provides proactive, holistic supports to assist students in postsecondary persistence and completion and in connecting with employers; and
- satisfies any additional requirements established by THECB rule.

C.S.H.B. 2030 requires a program grant awarded to an eligible collaborative to be made for a period sufficient to cover the enrollment in, persistence in, and timely completion of a certificate or degree program for two consecutive cohorts of students. Each grant consists of the following components for each cohort:

- an initial amount at the beginning of the first academic year for which the grant is awarded equal to \$1,000 for each low-income student who:
 - graduated in the preceding school year from a high school participating in the collaborative; and
 - enrolls at a public, private, or independent institution of higher education for that academic year; and
- at the end of each academic year for which the grant is awarded, a bonus for each student who, as determined by the THECB, persists or timely completes a certificate or degree program at any institution of higher education.

The bill establishes that the bonus per student who persists at any institution of higher education is an amount equal to \$25 million divided by the total number of qualifying students and that the bonus per student who timely completes a certificate or degree program at any institution of higher education is an amount equal to \$20 million divided by the total number of qualifying students. The bill caps the amount of a bonus at \$2,000 per student.

C.S.H.B. 2030 authorizes the following uses for a grant awarded to an eligible collaborative:

- staff support for the collaborative;
- student services designed to increase postsecondary enrollment, persistence, and completion;
- student financial assistance;
- programs that provide training for jobs in targeted workforce fields, as determined by the THECB; and
- other expenses approved by the THECB.

The bill requires each collaborative that receives a program grant to collect and report to the THECB information regarding postsecondary enrollment, persistence, and completion, disaggregated by category and semester or term, as required by the THECB. The bill requires the THECB, not later than December 1 of each year, to submit to the legislature a report on the effectiveness of the grant program and any recommendations for legislative or other action.

C.S.H.B. 2030 requires the THECB to implement the grant program only if federal funding is provided to the THECB for that purpose as part of any federal coronavirus disease (COVID-19) relief spending appropriated on or after January 1, 2021, and requires the THECB to begin awarding program grants for the first academic year for which federal funding is appropriated for that purpose. The bill authorizes the THECB, if applicable funding is not provided, to implement the grant program using other money available to the THECB for that purpose. The bill authorizes the THECB to adopt rules as necessary to implement the bill's provisions.

EFFECTIVE DATE

On passage, or, if the bill does not receive the necessary vote, September 1, 2021.

COMPARISON OF ORIGINAL AND SUBSTITUTE

While C.S.H.B. 2030 may differ from the original in minor or nonsubstantive ways, the following summarizes the substantial differences between the introduced and committee substitute versions of the bill.

The substitute includes provisions not included in the original making the required grant program implementation contingent on specified federal funding but authorizing the program's implementation using other money available to the THECB for that purpose if federal funding is not provided.

The substitute changes the original's requirements for a regional postsecondary education collaborative in the following ways:

- requires a collaborative to include at least one school district and public junior college in order to be eligible for the program, whereas the original did not include this requirement;
- requires a collaborative, to be eligible for the program, to develop and submit to the THECB a plan detailing how the collaborative would use grant funds, whereas the original did not include this requirement;
- changes from critical, in the original, to targeted the type of workforce fields to which an eligible collaborative must have a demonstrated connection; and
- requires each collaborative grant recipient to disaggregate the data provided to the THECB by category and semester or term, whereas the original only required disaggregation by semester or term.

The substitute changes the original's components of a program grant in the following ways:

- it does not include the original's requirement for a collaborative to provide, at a minimum, a scholarship to students in an amount that, when combined with other federal or state student financial assistance for which the student is eligible, covers the full cost of tuition and required fees for two academic years at a public junior college;
- it changes the original's language relating to a requirement that a program grant be made for two sequential academic years to language requiring a program grant be made for a period sufficient to cover two consecutive cohorts of students;
- it requires the grant to consist of an initial amount at the beginning of the first academic year for which the grant is awarded, whereas the original required the initial grant amount at the beginning of each academic year;
- it changes an authorized use of a grant from, in the original, providing training for regional jobs in high demand that pay a living wage to providing training for jobs in targeted workforce fields, as determined by the THECB; and
- it includes a \$2,000 cap on the per-student bonus, whereas the original did not include a cap.

The substitute changes the original's eligibility requirements for student grant recipients as follows:

- it makes eligible a student who has graduated from a high school participating in the collaborative, whereas the original made eligible a student who has graduated from any high school in the preceding year;
- it includes enrollment at a private or independent institution of higher education as a requirement for eligibility, whereas the original only required enrollment at a public institution of higher education for eligibility; and
- it expands the original's definition of "low-income student" to include a student who has equivalent need, as determined by THECB rule, in addition to a student eligible to receive a federal Pell Grant, whereas the original did not include equivalent need as part of the definition.

The substitute does not include the original's provision limiting the number of students to whom a bonus for persisting at an institution of higher education or timely program completion applies and does not include the original's definition of the term "timely completion" contained in the original.