

BILL ANALYSIS

S.B. 165
By: Blanco
Higher Education
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Under current law, students enrolled in a public institution of higher education are not permitted to drop more than six courses in their undergraduate career. However, the COVID-19 pandemic forced students and institutions to transition to online learning, resulting in many students facing the decision to drop courses. S.B. 165 seeks to address this issue by providing for an exception to the limit on dropped classes if a disaster declaration by the governor results in a bar or limit on in-person course attendance. The bill retroactively prohibits classes dropped due to in-person limitations during the COVID-19 pandemic from counting toward the dropped course limits.

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

S.B. 165 amends the Education Code to require the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to adopt rules under which a public institution of higher education must permit a student to drop more than the maximum permitted number of courses that would otherwise apply if a disaster is declared by the governor under the Texas Disaster Act of 1975 and results in a bar or limit on in-person course attendance at the institution. This requirement applies beginning with the 2021 fall semester.

S.B. 165 prohibits an institution from counting toward the permitted number of dropped courses a course dropped by a student during the 2020 spring semester or summer term or during the 2020-2021 academic year because of a bar or limit on in-person course attendance at the institution during the applicable semester or term due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

EFFECTIVE DATE

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