

BILL ANALYSIS

S.B. 959
By: Zaffirini
Higher Education
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Community colleges across Texas offer a wide array of workforce training programs, including courses that lead to licenses and certifications in essential and high-demand fields. However, the state's current performance-based funding model does not take into account courses for certification or licensure requiring less than 360 contact hours. Accordingly, many colleges are unable to maintain or expand these programs, even as the state continues to suffer from a shortage of skilled trade laborers. Furthermore, the omission of these courses in funding models has forced colleges to raise tuition, further limiting opportunities for low-income students to enter shorter-term educational programs that lead to well-paying jobs. S.B. 959 seeks to address this issue by requiring the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, in making performance-based funding recommendations for junior colleges, to consider achievement in qualified continuing workforce education programs offered by those colleges regardless of degree plan.

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

S.B. 959 amends the Education Code to require the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, in making its recommendations to the legislature relating to institutional appropriations of performance-based incentive funds for public junior colleges, to consider student success measures achieved in qualified continuing workforce education courses offered by those colleges for which credit toward a certificate or associate's degree is not awarded. Such a course is considered qualified for purposes of incentive funding if the course is consistent with the role and mission of a public junior college and is designed to prepare students with skills necessary to attain external workforce credentials or employment in a specific high-demand occupation, regardless of whether the course is part of a recognized sequence of courses that requires a specific number of contact hours.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2021.