

**SUBJECT:** In-state tuition rates for Mexican students at Texas A&M-Corpus Christi

**COMMITTEE:** Higher Education — favorable, without amendment

**VOTE:** 6 ayes — Rangel, Solis, Bailey, Cuellar, Dunnam, Kamel  
1 nay — Rabuck  
2 absent — E. Reyna, Rodriguez

**WITNESSES:** For — None  
Against — None  
On — Robert R. Furgason

**BACKGROUND :** Chapter 54 of the Education Code allows certain exemptions from higher nonresident tuition rates. Mexican students enrolled in four-year universities in counties adjacent to the Mexican border or in Texas A&M at Kingsville may pay resident tuition rates if they demonstrate financial need. These students may transfer to a general academic teaching institution to complete a degree or attend graduate school.

**DIGEST:** HB 1629 would exempt financially needy Mexican students attending Texas A&M University at Corpus Christi from nonresident tuition rates.  
HB 1629 would take immediate effect if finally approved by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house, and would apply to tuition beginning with the 1997 fall semester.

**SUPPORTERS SAY:** HB 1629 would simply extend to Texas A&M at Corpus Christi the advantages of a program already approved by the Legislature. Last session, in-state tuition rates were granted financially needy Mexican students attending Texas A&M at Kingsville, and the program has been beneficial to both Mexican students and higher education in Texas. The area served by Texas A&M at Corpus Christi already participates in extensive cultural and financial exchange with Mexico; HB 1629 would complement these relationships by encouraging educational exchange between the two

countries. With educational exchange comes economic exchange, providing an important boost for development in South Texas.

Waiving nonresident fees would mean a temporary loss of revenue for the state; however, the benefits to be gained in this circumstance will far outweigh any short-term costs.

OPPONENTS  
SAY:

Mexican students may indeed deserve assistance with an access to higher education, but Texas taxpayers should not be asked to subsidize their tuition, especially when it is rising for Texas residents. The bill contains no provision for prioritizing requests. It would be difficult to select among many worthy claims without treating some students unfairly.

OTHER  
OPPONENTS  
SAY:

This session has seen a proliferation of proposals to exempt certain groups either wholly or in part from tuition requirements. This piecemeal approach could endanger the stability of our tuition system. The Legislature needs to exercise both prudence and consistency in granting exemptions rather than rushing headlong into feel-good exemptions. Such caution is necessary to hold down the financial pressure on our already strapped institutions of higher education and maintain the quality of the education provided to students in Texas.

NOTES:

The companion bill, SB 815 by Truan, is pending in the Senate Finance Committee.

HB 1820 by Solis and Flores, which would provide in-state tuition for Mexican students attending Texas State Technical College at Harlingen, was amended on the House floor to include Texas A&M at Corpus Christi. The bill passed the House April 17 and has been referred to the Senate Finance Committee.

