

SUBJECT: Establishing a statewide public higher education awareness campaign

COMMITTEE: Higher Education — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 8 ayes — Rangel, F. Brown, Farabee, Goolsby, J. Jones, Morrison, E. Reyna
0 nays
1 absent — Uher

SENATE VOTE: On final passage, March 7 — voice vote

WITNESSES: None

DIGEST: SB 573 would require the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) to establish a statewide public awareness campaign to promote higher education. The campaign could include the benefits of higher education, types of institutions and degree programs available, necessary academic preparation for enrollment, and financial aid information.

The campaign would have to be targeted at primary and secondary school students, with priority given to traditionally underrepresented groups.

THECB would be authorized to coordinate with other agencies and to use any available funds, including grants, donations, and appropriated money.

SB 573 would take effect September 1, 2001.

SUPPORTERS SAY: SB 573 is necessary because it would target the growing population of largely economically-disadvantaged children who often do not consider college as an option after high school. This public awareness campaign would be one of the most important strategies for meeting the four goals of THECB's "Closing the Gaps" higher education plan, which aims to add 500,000 students to Texas colleges and universities by 2015. Current recruiting methods would not be sufficient to meet this goal.

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The bill would give discretion to THECB to establish multilingual materials to better target families and communities. This would allow the board to reach parents and children in the best possible way and in the appropriate language.

OPPONENTS
SAY:

No apparent opposition.

NOTES:

According to the fiscal note, the public awareness program in SB 573 would cost a projected \$5,000,000 in fiscal 2002-03.

The Senate-passed version of SB 1 by Ellis, the fiscal 2002-03 general appropriations bill, includes in the Article 11 “wish list” \$5 million for the public awareness program, contingent on enactment of SB 573.