

SUBJECT: Establishing “Higher Education Is in Your Future” week in public schools

COMMITTEE: Public Education — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 5 ayes — Grusendorf, Dawson, Eissler, Griggs, Hochberg

0 nays

4 absent — Oliveira, Branch, Dutton, Madden

WITNESSES: For — Holly Eaton, Texas Classroom Teachers Association; Harley Eckhart, Texas Elementary Principals & Supervisors Association; Ted Melina Raab, Texas Federation of Teachers, Marjorie Wall, Texas State Teachers Association; Jo-Hannah Whitsett, Association of Texas Professional Educators

Against — None

DIGEST: HB 1206 would establish “Higher Education Is in Your Future” week at each middle, junior, and high school as well as each open-enrollment charter school offering grades 6-12. The schools must designate one week during the school year as “Higher Education Is in Your Future” week.

During that week, the school would promote the importance of higher education and provide students with comprehensive, grade-appropriate information regarding the pursuit of higher education. The information would have to address:

- available higher education options;
- requirements for admission and requirements related to completed curriculum, high school grades, and performance on required admissions tests and other relevant tests; and
- the availability of financial aid and requirements for obtaining aid.

Schools would invite guest speakers to make presentations during the week to the students about career options that required higher education.

These provisions would take effect beginning with the 2003-04 school year.

The bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house. Otherwise, it would take effect September 1, 2003.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

HB 1206 would help promote greater student awareness of higher education opportunities. Texas stands at a crossroads and has the opportunity to significantly improve the accessibility and quality of education to enrich the future for its people and for the state. The Rand Corporation and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) report that in order to be a prosperous state and have sustained economic growth, Texas must increase its higher education participation rates, especially in minority population groups. At present, large gaps exist among racial/ethnic groups in both enrollment and graduation from the state's colleges and universities. If these gaps are not closed today, Texas will have increasingly fewer college graduates to compose the highly skilled workforce that tomorrow's economy will demand.

In 2000, THECB released its long-term higher education plan known as Closing the Gaps. The plan's goal by 2005 is to increase Hispanic participation in higher education by 102,600 students. However, the total increase from 2000 to 2001 was only 15,419, an increase of just 15 percent. At this rate, the participation goal will not be met.

One of the THECB strategies to close the gaps in participation is to ensure that all students and their parents understand the benefits of higher education and the steps to prepare academically and financially for college. This is the effect that "Higher Education Is in Your Future" week is designed to produce.

The bill would help Texans attain the goals of higher education participation at no cost. According to the Legislative Budget Board, it would have no fiscal impact to the state.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

No apparent opposition.