

- SUBJECT:** Revising public awareness campaign promoting higher education
- COMMITTEE:** Higher Education — committee substitute recommended
- VOTE:** 7 ayes — Branch, Castro, Berman, Cohen, D. Howard, Patrick, Rose
0 nays
2 absent — Alonzo, McCall
- WITNESSES:** For — Bernie Francis, Business Control Systems; Bill Hammond, Texas Association of Business; Justin Yancy, Governor’s Business Council; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Monty Exter, Association of Texas Professional Educators)

Against — None

On — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Chris Alvarado, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board)
- BACKGROUND:** Education Code, ch. 61 regulates the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB). Sec. 61.9701 requires the THECB to establish a public awareness campaign to promote the value and availability of higher education targeted to primary and secondary school students.
- DIGEST:** CSHB 3795 would change the parameters of the public awareness campaign promoting higher education to target 7th through 12th grade students and those students eligible for the national free and reduced lunch program. The bill would require the THECB to coordinate campaign efforts with the Texas Education Agency (TEA), the P-16 Council, and other entities.

The bill would require annual meetings to be held for students and their parents to discuss the importance of higher education and how to prepare and pay for it. The board also would develop support mechanisms to help parents with financial aid forms and familiarize them with what students need to do to prepare for, apply to, and attend college.

THECB, in consultation with the TEA, would have to develop a plan for a student financial aid program. The program would be designed to provide financial aid, in addition to any other state or federal aid and the family's contribution, to help students who met the requirements for the recommended or advanced high school program and had not been convicted of a criminal offense or engaged in delinquent conduct.

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, 2009.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

Texas needs more low-income and minority students in the pipeline for higher education in order to reach the desired levels of statewide economic competitiveness. CSHB 3795 would provide an additional pathway for those students. Many families do not consider college an option because they do not believe they can afford to send their children to college. Financial aid money is available, but the state needs to do a better job of getting the information to students and their families. Targeting 7th through 12th grade students, with an emphasis on low-income and minority students, would reach the population that needs the information the most.

Given the demographic trends in Texas, more emphasis needs to be placed on low-income students. Unless Texas raises educational outcomes, especially Hispanic educational outcomes, economic competitiveness and quality of life in the state will decline.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

Targeting low-income students is a good idea, but the bill should include 6th grade students as well. Sixth-graders receive guidance and counseling and help with scheduling for their 7th grade courses, so it would be appropriate to include them in the targeted groups.

NOTES:

The committee substitute differs from the bill as filed by requiring annual meetings for targeted students and their families to be held at locations likely to be easily accessible to them, rather than at institutions of higher education.

The companion bill, SB 1559 by Shapiro, was considered by the Senate Education Committee in a public hearing on April 22 and left pending.