

- SUBJECT:** Exempting certain paramedics from relevant tuition and laboratory fees
- COMMITTEE:** Higher Education — favorable, without amendment
- VOTE:** 9 ayes — C. Turner, Stucky, Button, Frullo, Howard, Pacheco, Smithee, Walle, Wilson
- 1 nay — Schaefer
- 1 absent — E. Johnson
- SENATE VOTE:** On final passage, May 3 — 30-1 (Schwertner)
- WITNESSES:** *On House companion bill, HB 3890:*
For — Holly Craghead, Association of Texas EMS Professionals; Selena Xie, Austin EMS Association; Jason Dyess, City Of Paris EMS;
(*Registered, but did not testify:* Joel Romo, Association of Texas EMS Professionals; Eric Lefevre and Juan Mejias, Association of Texas EMS Professionals; Rita Ostrander, Combined Law Enforcement Associations of Texas; Rene Lara, Texas AFL-CIO; James Mathis, Texas Ambulance Association; Joshua Houston, Texas Impact; Monty Wynn, Texas Municipal League; and 19 individuals)
- Against — None
- On — (*Registered, but did not testify:* Julie Eklund and Ken Martin, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board)
- BACKGROUND:** Education Code sec. 54.353 exempts from the payment of tuition and laboratory fees any student enrolled in one or more courses offered as part of a fire science curriculum who is employed as a firefighter or who is an active member of an organized volunteer fire department participating in certain state or local retirement systems.
- DIGEST:** SB 2231 would require the governing board of a public institution of higher education to exempt from the payment of tuition and laboratory

fees any student enrolled in one or more courses offered as part of a fire science curriculum who was employed as a paramedic by a political subdivision of the state.

The bill would authorize such a governing board, in accordance with Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board rule, to exclude from the exemption a course that was offered through distance education.

The coordinating board would have to adopt rules prescribing the educational attainment or level of certification necessary to qualify for an exemption as a paramedic, as well as rules prescribing the maximum number of distance education courses that could be excluded from the exemption.

The bill would apply beginning with the fall 2019 semester.

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, 2019.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

SB 2231 would help paramedics provide high-quality, life-saving care by providing them with the educational opportunity to attain the skills they need. Adding paramedics employed by a political subdivision to an existing tuition exemption currently enjoyed by firefighters would recognize that the role paramedics play as first responders is expanding, and would help them meet these new demands.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

SB 2231 would create a tuition exemption that would favor one professional class over another. With the cost of higher education continually rising, the creation of additional exemptions could result in other students carrying a larger financial burden.