

- SUBJECT:** Exempting certain paramedics from relevant tuition and lab fees
- COMMITTEE:** Higher Education — favorable, without amendment
- VOTE:** 10 ayes — Murphy, Pacheco, Cortez, Frullo, Muñoz, Ortega, Parker, Raney, C. Turner, J. Turner
- 0 nays
- 1 absent — P. King
- WITNESSES:** For — Amy Ramon, Cy Fair Fire Department; Jason Dyess; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Harrison Hiner, Communications Workers of America; Georgia Keysor; Thomas Parkinson; Jason Pickett)
- Against — None
- 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 by a political subdivision of the state or who meets certain conditions as an active member of an organized volunteer fire department.
- Interested parties observe that a similar tuition exemption would benefit the estimated 3,000 paramedics who are not employed as firefighters and could better prepare those paramedics to serve their communities.
- DIGEST:** HB 582 would require the governing board of an 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 an emergency medical services curriculum who was employed as a paramedic by a political subdivision of the state. The exemption would not apply to certain security deposits or to additional tuition relating to repeated or excessive undergraduate or graduate hours.
- A student who received an exemption for a semester or term could

continue to receive it for a subsequent semester or term at any institution only if the student made satisfactory academic progress toward a degree or certificate at that institution as determined by the institution for purposes of financial aid.

The bill authorizes an institution's governing board to exclude from the exemption certain courses offered exclusively through distance education.

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board would be required to adopt rules governing the granting or denial of an exemption provided by the bill. The rules would have to include a listing of degree programs covered by the exemption and rules:

- prescribing the educational attainment or level of certification necessary to qualify for an exemption as a paramedic;
- relating to the determination of a student's eligibility for an exemption; and
- prescribing the maximum number of distance education courses that could be excluded from the exemption.

The bill would apply to tuition and laboratory fees beginning with the 2021 fall semester.

This 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, 2021.

**NOTES:**

According to the Legislative Budget Board fiscal note, higher education system offices reported that the bill's impact on foregone revenues would not be significant.