

SUBJECT: Allowing Navarro College to offer a bachelor's degree program in nursing

COMMITTEE: Higher Education — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 10 ayes — Murphy, Pacheco, Cortez, Frullo, Muñoz, Ortega, Parker,
Raney, C. Turner, J. Turner

0 nays

1 absent — P. King

WITNESSES: For — Will Turner, Baylor Scott & White Medical Center-Waxahachie;
Kevin Fegan, Navarro College; Kalli Young; (*Registered, but did not
testify*: Guy Featherston, Navarro College; Thomas Parkinson)

Against — None

BACKGROUND: Education Code sec. 130.307(b)(1) allows a public junior college to offer
a baccalaureate degree program only if its junior college district had a
taxable property valuation amount of not less than \$6 billion in the
preceding year.

DIGEST: CSHB 885 would create an exception to the requirement that a junior
college district meet a certain threshold for taxable property valuation to
offer a baccalaureate degree program. The exception would be for a
nursing degree program offered by Navarro College if the degree program
met other statutory requirements for approval by the Texas Higher
Education Coordinating Board.

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, 2021.

SUPPORTERS SAY: CSHB 885 would meet a growing demand for highly educated nurses to
serve in Navarro County's seven hospitals by allowing Navarro College, a
public community college, to offer a bachelor of nursing degree program.

The baccalaureate degree program would complement Navarro College's successful associate degree nursing program and would provide an affordable option for local students who are most likely to work in the area after receiving their degrees.

The program could be initiated with existing resources because Navarro College has the infrastructure and faculty in place, and it is not expected to result in increased property tax rates. It would have to be approved by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, which must consider whether the program would unnecessarily duplicate degree programs offered by other higher education institutions and whether the college has long-term plans to finance the program and recruit any necessary faculty, among other factors.

While some say that the bill should be expanded to allow all junior college districts with taxable property valuation amounts of less than \$6 billion to offer bachelor degree programs, it is appropriate for the Legislature to carve out exemptions for a community college that has demonstrated the need and resources to implement a bachelor degree program in a specific discipline, as has previously been done.

**CRITICS
SAY:**

CSHB 885 could create an unfair advantage for Navarro College by exempting it from a legislatively enacted limitation on when a junior college may qualify to offer a bachelor's degree program. It would be better public policy to amend the bill to apply the exemption to all junior college districts.