

SUBJECT: Waiving the limitation on dropped courses under certain circumstances

COMMITTEE: Higher Education — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 9 ayes — Murphy, Pacheco, Cortez, Frullo, Muñoz, Ortega, Parker, C. Turner, J. Turner

0 nays

2 absent — P. King, Raney

SENATE VOTE: On final passage, April 13 — 31-0

WITNESSES: None

BACKGROUND: Education Code sec. 51.907 prohibits an institution of higher education from permitting a student to drop more than six courses, with certain exceptions. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board is required to adopt rules under which an institution of higher education must permit a student to drop more than six courses under certain circumstances if the student shows good cause.

Concerns have been raised about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic forcing students and institutions of higher education to transition to online learning, resulting in many students facing the decision to drop courses. Some have suggested exempting students from dropped course limitations if a disaster declaration by the governor resulted in a prohibition or limit on in-person course attendance.

DIGEST: SB 165 would require the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to adopt rules under which a public institution of higher education could not count toward the maximum number of courses permitted to be dropped a course dropped by a student if a disaster was declared by the governor and resulted in a bar or limit on in-person course attendance at the institution.

The bill also would prohibit an institution of higher education from

counting toward the permitted number of dropped courses a course dropped by a student during the 2020 spring semester or summer term or the 2020-2021 academic year because of a bar or limit on in-person course attendance at the institution due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The bill would apply 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.