

SUBJECT: Requiring THECB to consider measures in funding recommendations

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 14 — 31-0

WITNESSES: None

BACKGROUND: Education Code sec. 61.0593(f) requires the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, in devising its funding formulas and making legislative recommendations relating to incentive funds for public junior colleges, public state colleges, and public technical institutes, to consider the undergraduate student success measures achieved during the preceding state fiscal biennium by these institutions.

DIGEST: SB 959 would require the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, in making funding recommendations related to institutional appropriations of incentive funds for public junior colleges, to consider student success measures achieved in qualified continuing workforce education courses offered by public junior colleges for which credit toward a certificate or associate's degree was not awarded.

A continuing workforce education course would be considered qualified if the course was consistent with the role and mission of a public junior college and was designed to prepare students with skills necessary to attain external workforce credentials, including a certification or license, or employment in a specific high-demand occupation, regardless of whether the course was part of a recognized sequence of courses that required a specific number of contact hours.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2021.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

SB 959 would aid the development of a skilled workforce in the state by requiring the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) to consider continuing workforce education courses in its funding recommendations for public junior colleges.

Despite providing valuable workforce training for students, many of whom go on to acquire state occupational licenses, continuing workforce education courses are not taken into account by the current state funding formula for junior colleges. This exclusion makes it difficult for colleges to offer or expand existing programs at a time when the state would greatly benefit from an expanded skilled workforce. The bill remedies this problem by requiring THECB to consider such workforce courses in making its recommendations for institutional funding appropriations. The bill would not alter the state funding formula for public junior colleges, but would simply require THECB to consider continuing workforce education courses in its funding recommendations.

**CRITICS
SAY:**

SB 959 could increase costs to the state by potentially increasing funding recommendations for public junior colleges by an unknown amount. Before opening the door to increases in funding, the Legislature should require a study be conducted to determine the potential impact of the bill's provisions on formula funding.

NOTES:

According to the Legislative Budget Board, the impact of the bill on formula funding for public junior colleges, state colleges, and technical institutes cannot be determined because the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board collects only a subset of continuing workforce education course data.