

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

S.B. 1510
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Finance
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As Filed

DIGEST

Nationally, Texas ranks third behind California and New York in the population of adults who lack a high school credential. A 1993 survey conducted by the Educational Testing Services says that between 27 and 28 percent of Texas' adults (approximately 3.5 million) fall into the lowest level of literacy. However, Texas is one of the lowest in the nation in available funds for adult education and literacy programs for the eligible target population.

Literacy is defined as "being able to use printed and written information to function in society, to achieve's one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential." The Texas Literacy Pilot Program would provide a two-fold service: a more literate state, as well as using financial assistance for education as an incentive to raise the number of literacy tutors and volunteers.

PURPOSE

As proposed, S.B. 1510 established the Texas Literacy Pilot Program to increase the number of literate citizens in Texas by providing exemptions from college tuition and fees to students working as volunteer tutors in community-based literacy programs.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority is granted to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board under SECTION 1 (Section 56.230, Education Code), of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Chapter 56, Education Code, by adding Subchapter L, as follows:

Sec. 56.220. PROGRAM NAME. Requires the student financial assistance program authorized by this subchapter to be known as the Texas Literacy Pilot Program.

Sec. 56.221. PURPOSE. Provides that the purpose of this subchapter is to increase the number of literate citizens in Texas by providing exemptions from college tuition and fees to students working as volunteer tutors in community-based literacy programs.

Sec. 56.222. ADMINISTRATIVE AUTHORITY. Requires the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (coordinating board) to administer the Texas Literacy Pilot Program. Requires the board to work with eligible literacy programs and institutions of higher education to provide eligible students with tuition and fee exemptions based on their work as tutors.

Sec. 56.223. ELIGIBLE LITERACY PROGRAM. Provides than an eligible literacy program is a program run by a governmental entity or a nonprofit community organization or agency which offers literacy tutoring to teenagers or adults. Sets forth requirements regarding the participation in the pilot program by a literacy program.

Sec. 56.224. ELIGIBLE STUDENT. Requires a student, in order to participate in the pilot program, to be evaluated by the participating literacy program and determined to be qualified to provide tutoring to teenagers or adults, and meet the entrance and academic progress

requirements of the institution of higher education at which the exemption is used. Requires a student, in order to be eligible to receive a tuition and fee exemption under this program, to complete no fewer than the number of hours of tutoring required under this subchapter. Provides that preference will be given to students enrolled in college who provide documentation from their institutions that they have financial need.

Sec. 56.225. **ELIGIBLE INSTITUTION.** Provides that an eligible institution is a general academic teaching institution or a public junior college as defined in Section 61.003 of this code.

Sec. 56.226. **SELECTION OF LITERACY PROGRAMS TO PARTICIPATE.** Requires the board, in selecting an eligible literacy program to participate in the pilot program, to consider certain information.

Sec. 56.227. **SIZE OF EXEMPTION AWARDS.** Authorizes a student enrolled in a public junior college to receive a \$500 exemption of tuition and fees upon completion of 50 hours of tutoring. Authorizes a student enrolled in a general academic teaching institution to receive a \$1,000 exemption of tuition and fees upon completion of 100 hours of tutoring. Provides that the maximum award any student may receive is a \$1,000 exemption from tuition and fees.

Sec. 56.228. **GRANTING OF EXEMPTIONS.** Requires the literacy program, when a student has completed the number of hours tutoring required to become eligible for a tuition and fee exemption, to provide the student with a certificate indicating the number of hours of tutoring completed. Requires the certificate to be on a form designated by the coordinating board. Requires the literacy program to report to the coordinating board certain information. Requires an eligible student to provide the certificate of completion to the institution of higher education in which the student is enrolled and in exchange to receive an exemption for the amount of tuition and fees for which the student is eligible. Requires, at least once a year, an eligible institution to report to the coordinating board certain information. Requires the coordinating board, upon receipt of the report from an eligible institution, to verify that the student has been reported by the literacy program as having completed the required number of hours tutoring. Requires the coordinating board, once the coordinating board verifies a student's eligibility, to pay the institution the amount of the tuition and fee exemptions reported as earned by its students.

Sec. 56.229. **FUNDING.** Authorizes the coordinating board to accept gifts and grants from a public or private source for the program. Authorizes gifts, grants, and funds appropriated by the legislature for this purpose to be used for the program.

Sec. 56.230. **RULEMAKING AUTHORITY.** Requires the coordinating board to adopt rules to implement and administer the literacy pilot program.

SECTION 2. (a) Effective date: September 1, 1997.

(b) Prohibits any student from being granted a tuition and fee exemption prior to the spring semester of 1998.

SECTION 3. Emergency clause.