

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

S.B. 678
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Finance
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As Filed

DIGEST

Currently, Texas law permits youth in the Department of Protection and Regulatory Services (DPRS) foster care to obtain free tuition at state operated colleges, universities, and vocation schools when they become 18 years of age or older.

In 1995-96, 217 youths took advantages of this program which may provide an incentive for many children in foster to complete high school and enter college.

Currently, state law requires that former foster care youths be 18 years or older in order to utilize the college tuition waiver. DPRS estimates that this affects about 25 youths per year who graduate high school before their 18th birthday and are ready to attend college. DPRS estimates that the ineligible children stay in the state's conservatorship while waiting to reach age 18 to take advantage of the waiver. Meanwhile, the state continues to pay for the foster care of these children. This bill would extend the current tuition waiver to youths of any age who graduate from high school or receive a high school equivalency degree while under DPRS conservatorship.

PURPOSE

As proposed, S.B. 678 provides an exemption of tuition and fees for higher education to a student who was in foster care at the time the student graduated from high school or received the equivalent of a high school diploma.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Section 54.211, Education Code, as follows:

Sec. 54.211. EXEMPTIONS FOR STUDENTS IN FOSTER OR OTHER RESIDENTIAL CARE. Provides that a student is exempt from the payment of tuition and fees authorized in this chapter if the student was in foster care or other residential care under the conservatorship of the Department of Protective and Regulatory Services when the student graduated from high school or received the equivalent of a high school diploma, regardless of the students age, and enrolls in an institution of higher education as an undergraduate student not later than the third anniversary of the date the student was discharged from the foster or other residential care.

SECTION 2. Provides that this Act takes effect with the tuition and fees charged for the 1997 fall semester.

SECTION 3. Emergency clause.