

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

H.B. 3795
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Higher Education
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Engrossed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Many families view higher education as essential to success; however, many people find the process of preparing their children for college difficult and confusing, which could lead parents to discourage their children from pursuing higher education. Parents of first-generation college-bound students do not have their own experiences from which to draw to assist their children to prepare, such as suggesting which courses might help their children succeed beyond high school. Financial aid forms can be confusing and difficult for parents to complete, and such difficulties can deter parents from helping their children apply for financial aid.

This legislation creates a partnership between the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) and the Texas Education Agency to promote public awareness about the value and availability of higher education among certain students, especially those students who are educationally disadvantaged. The bill requires THECB and certain entities to hold annual meetings at institutions of higher education for certain students and their parents to explain financial aid programs and forms, the importance of higher education, and courses that will help students prepare for success in higher education.

H.B. 3795 relates to the public awareness campaign promoting higher education and to additional financial aid for higher education.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

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

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Section 61.9701(a), Education Code, to require the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), in conjunction with the Texas Education Agency (TEA), to establish a statewide public awareness campaign to promote the value and availability of higher education.

SECTION 2. Amends Sections 61.9702 and 61.9703, Education Code, as follows:

Sec. 61.9702. TARGET AUDIENCE. (a) Requires that the campaign established by THECB target students in the sixth through 12th grade levels, rather than primary and secondary school students.

(b) Requires THECB to give priority to reaching students from groups or backgrounds that are traditionally underrepresented in higher education, rather than primary and secondary school students, especially students who are educationally disadvantaged, as defined by Section 5.001 (Definitions). Makes a conforming change.

(c) Authorizes the campaign established by THECB to target students in elementary grades, including grade six.

Sec. 61.9703. New heading: COORDINATION WITH OTHER ENTITIES. Requires THECB to coordinate with TEA, the P-16 Council established under Section 61.076 (P-16 Council), and other appropriate entities, including businesses, rather than requiring

THECB to coordinate with other agencies as necessary, to develop and implement the public awareness campaign in order to send a strong message concerning the importance of higher education.

SECTION 3. Amends Subchapter CC, Chapter 61, Education Code, by adding Section 61.97031, as follows:

Sec. 61.97031. CAMPAIGN DESIGN CRITERIA. Requires THECB, in conjunction with those entities with which THECB coordinates under Section 61.9703, to annually hold meetings of students described by Section 61.9702 and their parents, at locations likely to be easily accessible to them, to explain financial aid opportunities that may make attending an institution of higher education affordable; the reasons that higher education is important; and secondary education courses that may help to prepare students to succeed at institutions of higher education; and develop support mechanisms for parents of students described by Section 61.9702 to assist the parents with understanding and completing the free application for federal student aid; and familiarize the parents with the actions necessary for students to be prepared for, apply to, and attend institutions of higher education.

SECTION 4. Amends Subchapter CC, Chapter 61, Education Code, by adding Section 61.9706, as follows:

Sec. 61.9706. EVALUATION. (a) Requires THECB to evaluate the effectiveness of the public awareness campaign.

(b) Requires THECB, in evaluating the effectiveness of the public awareness campaign, to use appropriate commonly accepted methodologies and evaluation criteria and spend existing funds available to THECB that may be used for the purpose.

(c) Requires THECB, not later than December 31, 2010, to submit a written report concerning the results of the evaluation to the governor, lieutenant governor, speaker of the house of representatives, and presiding officers of the legislative standing committees with primary jurisdiction over public education and higher education.

(d) Provides that this section expires January 31, 2011.

SECTION 5. Amends Subchapter A, Chapter 56, Education Code, by adding Section 56.005, as follows:

Sec. 56.005. ADDITIONAL STUDENT FINANCIAL AID PROGRAM. Requires THECB, in consultation with TEA, to develop a plan for a student financial aid program designed to provide financial aid in addition to any aid provided under certain financial aid programs and any contributions from parents; and to provide financial aid to students who have met certain curriculum requirements and have not been convicted of a criminal offense or found to have engaged in certain delinquent conduct.

SECTION 6. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2009.