

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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S.B. 1472
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Economic Development
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As Filed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Every year thousands of Texans decide to better themselves by pursuing higher education. Whether they decide to go to a public institution, a private institution, or a for-profit institution, Texans need reliable information to make an informed decision regarding which higher education path is best for them. For-profit institutions are in their own classification of higher education because many are not located in Texas and receive no state dollars, and thus are more difficult to regulate. The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) both have information relevant to for-profit institutions on their websites, but the information is not currently easily accessible. Because for-profit institutions are more difficult to regulate, often the only remedy for a consumer is to make a formal complaint with the Office of the Attorney General (OAG). Currently, there is not an easily accessible way to make such complaints nor is there an easy way for OAG to monitor potentially detrimental activities conducted by for-profit institutions.

S.B. 1472 makes consumer information readily available in an easily accessible web format so Texans can make the most informed decisions when choosing a for-profit institution. This would combine the information at TWC and at THECB and make it easily accessible in a one-stop shop for consumers. The information would be a snapshot of all information relevant to choosing a college, similar to the online resumes currently available for public institutions on THECB's website. S.B. 1472 also creates an avenue for people to easily register complaints with the OAG regarding potentially illegal actions by for-profit institutions and it makes it easier for the OAG to monitor and take action on legitimate complaints.

As proposed, S.B. 1472 amends current law relating to the coordinated dissemination of online information regarding the operation and performance of certain for-profit educational entities.

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 Subchapter C, Chapter 61, Education Code, by adding Section 61.0778, as follows:

Sec. 61.0778. ONLINE INFORMATION REGARDING CERTAIN FOR-PROFIT EDUCATIONAL ENTITIES. (a) Defines "commission" in this section.

(b) Requires the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) and the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) to jointly develop a comprehensive strategy to improve and coordinate the dissemination of online information regarding the operation and performance of for-profit private postsecondary educational institutions and for-profit career schools or colleges in this state. Requires THECB and TWC, as part of the comprehensive strategy, to compile, share, and compare any applicable information under the control of each agency and organize that information as nearly as possible according to the categories of information required for the online resumes of general academic teaching

institutions under Section 51A.103 (Institution Resume for Prospective Students, Parents, and Other Members of the Public).

(c) Requires THECB and TWC, for each for-profit private postsecondary educational institution or for-profit career school or college that THECB or TWC identifies as doing business in this state, to each publish on the Texas Education Agency's (TEA) Internet website any information described by Subsection (b) that THECB and TWC jointly determine would assist a person in deciding whether to enroll in the institution, school, or college, or in identifying or choosing which institution, school, or college to attend. Requires that the website:

(1) present information regarding those institutions, schools, and colleges in a manner that is to the extent practicable, consistent among the institutions, schools, and colleges; and easily accessible and readily understandable to the public; and

(2) allow for interactive online reporting of complaints from the public about a specific institution, school, or college.

(d) Requires THECB and TWC to each refer any complaint TEA receives under Subsection (c)(2) regarding the operation and performance of a for-profit career school or college to the consumer protection division of the attorney general's office for timely investigation and resolution of the complaint.

SECTION 2. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2011.