

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
86R13925 SOS-D

S.B. 1540
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Higher Education
4/15/2019
As Filed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

College students, particularly those who are new or incoming students at an institution, are often unaware of the support resources available to them. Such institutionally run services or public programs cover a wide variety of topics, including medical and behavioral health coverage, food security, affordable housing, child care, academic advising, career advising, and more.

Currently, Section 51.9356, Education Code, requires public higher education institutions to designate a liaison officer for current and incoming students who were formerly wards of the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS). However, all students, especially those from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds, may need one or more of the aforementioned services at some point in their college career. Accordingly, it is critical that university liaison officers be available to help direct any student in need to available resources.

S.B. 1540 requires that each institution of higher education designate a liaison officer for current or incoming students. This liaison officer may be the same employee that institutions are already required to designate for students who were formerly in the conservatorship of DFPS.

As proposed, S.B. 1540 amends current law relating to the designation of support services liaison officers at public institutions of 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 Subchapter Z, Chapter 51, Education Code, by adding Section 51.9358, as follows:

Sec. 51.9358. DESIGNATION OF SUPPORT SERVICES LIAISON OFFICER TO ASSIST STUDENTS. (a) Defines "coordinating board" as the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and defines "institution of higher education" for purposes of this section.

(b) Requires each institution of higher education to designate at least one employee of the institution to act as a liaison officer for current or incoming students at the institution. Requires the liaison officer to provide to the students comprehensive information regarding certain support services and other resources available to the students.

(c) Authorizes an institution of higher education to designate under Subsection (b) the same employee to act as a liaison officer as the employee designated under Section 51.9356 (Designation of Liaison Officer to Assist Students Formerly in Foster Care) to act as liaison officer for current and incoming students at the institution who were formerly in the conservatorship in the Department of Family and Protective Services.

SECTION 2. Provides that this Act applies beginning with the 2019–2020 school year.

SECTION 3. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2019.