

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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C.S.S.B. 330
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Higher Education
3/21/2019
Committee Report (Substituted)

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Texas currently has two major state-managed financial aid programs for students attending public institutions of higher education: the Toward Excellence and Success (TEXAS) Grant and Texas Educational Opportunity Grant (TEOG). Eligibility for these grants is limited to students enrolled in baccalaureate programs at four-year institutions and associate degree or certification programs at two-year institutions, respectively.

In recent years the legislature has begun to approve baccalaureate programs offered at two-year institutions. A useful means of expanding access to high-need professions (e.g., nursing, child care, etc.) at a lower cost for students and the state, these programs are becoming increasingly popular and are expected to expand in the future. Neither TEXAS Grants nor the TEOG program, as their eligibility requirements currently stand, can provide funds for students pursuing baccalaureate degrees at public two-year institutions of higher education.

S.B. 330 would expand eligibility of the Texas Educational Opportunity Grant Program to include those pursuing baccalaureate degrees at public two-year institutions of higher education, thereby eliminating the eligibility gap these students currently experience. Students affected by this legislation would be subject to the same continuing eligibility criteria as those of TEXAS Grants. (Original Author's/Sponsor's Statement of Intent)

C.S.S.B. 330 amends current law relating to the award of a grant under the Texas Educational Opportunity Grant Program to certain students enrolled in a baccalaureate degree program.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in SECTION 7 of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Section 56.402(b), Education Code, to provide that the purpose of this subchapter (Texas Educational Opportunity Grant Program) is to provide a grant of money to enable eligible students to attend eligible institutions, rather than two-year public institutions of higher education, in this state.

SECTION 2. Amends Sections 56.404(a), (c), and (f), Education Code, as follows:

(a) Requires a person, to be eligible initially for a grant under the Texas Educational Opportunity Grant Program (grant program) to:

(1)–(2) makes no changes to these subdivisions;

(3) be enrolled in an associate or baccalaureate degree program or a certificate program at an eligible institution;

(4) makes conforming changes; and

(5)–(6) makes no changes to these subdivisions.

(c) Provides that a person is not eligible to receive a grant under this subchapter if the person has been granted:

(1) an associate degree, if the person is enrolled in an associate degree or certificate program; or

(2) a baccalaureate degree.

(f) Provides that a person's eligibility for a grant under this subchapter ends on:

(1) the fourth anniversary of the initial award of a grant under this subchapter to the person and the person's enrollment in an eligible institution, if the person is enrolled in a degree or certificate program of two years or less; or

(2) the fifth anniversary of the initial award of a grant under this subchapter to the person and the person's enrollment in an eligible institution, if the person is enrolled in a degree program of more than two years.

SECTION 3. Amends Sections 56.405(a) and (d), Education Code, to make conforming changes.

SECTION 4. Amends Subchapter P, Chapter 56, Education Code, by adding Section 56.4051, as follows:

Sec. 56.4051. **MAXIMUM NUMBER OF SEMESTER CREDIT HOURS.** (a) Prohibits a person who is enrolled in an associate degree program or a certificate program at an eligible institution from receiving a grant under this subchapter for more than 75 semester credit hours or the equivalent.

(b) Prohibits a person who is enrolled in a baccalaureate degree program at an eligible institution from receiving a grant under this subchapter for more than the greater of 135 semester credit hours or the equivalent, or 15 semester credit hours, or the equivalent, in addition to the number of credit hours needed to complete the person's baccalaureate degree program.

SECTION 5. amends Section 56.407(a), Education Code, as follows:

(a) Provides that the amount of a grant under this subchapter for a student enrolled full-time at an eligible institution is the amount determined by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) as the average statewide amount of tuition and required fees that would be charged, rather than that a resident student enrolled full-time in an associate degree or certificate program would be charged, for that semester or term at eligible institutions to a resident student enrolled full-time in:

(1) an associate degree program or certificate program, if the student receiving the grant is enrolled in an associate degree program or a certificate program; or

(2) a baccalaureate degree program, if the student receiving the grant is enrolled in a baccalaureate degree program.

SECTION 6. Repealer: Section 56.404(d) (relating to a maximum of credit hours for which a person is authorized to receive a grant under the grant program), Education Code.

SECTION 7. (a) Requires THECB to adopt rules to administer the grant program consistent with the changes made by this Act to Subchapter P, Chapter 56, Education Code, as soon as practicable after the effective date of this Act.

(b) Provides that the changes in law made by this Act to Subchapter P, Chapter 56, Education Code, apply beginning with initial or subsequent grants awarded for the 2020 fall semester. Makes application of this Act prospective.

SECTION 8. Effective date: September 1, 2019.