

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

H.B. 653  
By: Clardy  
Higher Education  
Committee Report (Unamended)

### **BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE**

According to interested parties, not enough students have access to Texas educational opportunity grants and the benefits those grants convey. H.B. 653 seeks to address these issues by applying various reforms to the grant program.

### **CRIMINAL JUSTICE IMPACT**

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly create a criminal offense, increase the punishment for an existing criminal offense or category of offenses, or change the eligibility of a person for community supervision, parole, or mandatory supervision.

### **RULEMAKING AUTHORITY**

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

### **ANALYSIS**

H.B. 653 amends the Education Code to extend initial and continuing eligibility for the Texas educational opportunity grant program to a student, including an entering student for purposes of initial eligibility, enrolled in a baccalaureate degree program at a public junior college, public technical institute, or public state college for at least one-half of a full course load. The bill conditions the ineligibility for the program of a person who has been granted an associate degree on the person being enrolled in an associate degree or certificate program and limits the semester credit hours for which a person enrolled in a baccalaureate degree program may receive a grant to the greater of 135 semester credit hours or the equivalent or 15 semester credit hours or the equivalent more than the total number of semester credit hours or the equivalent required by the institution for the degree program in which the person is enrolled.

H.B. 653 conditions the applicability of the provision ending a person's eligibility for a program grant on the fourth anniversary of the initial award and the person's enrollment in a program-eligible institution on the person being enrolled in a degree or certificate program of two years or less. The bill establishes that the eligibility of a person enrolled in a degree program of more than two years ends on the fifth such anniversary. The bill allows a person who is otherwise eligible to receive a program grant, in the event of a hardship or for other good cause shown and as provided by rule of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, to receive a grant for a number of semester credit hours that is greater than the number permitted or for a number of years that is greater than the number for which a person is eligible.

H.B. 653 changes the purpose for which a person receiving a program grant may use the money from the payment of any usual and customary cost of attendance at an eligible institution incurred by the student to only the payment of the amount of tuition and required fees and the cost of required textbooks at an eligible institution incurred by the student.

H.B. 653 changes the prescribed amount of a program grant from the amount determined by the coordinating board as the average statewide amount of tuition and required fees 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 an amount not to exceed the lesser of the student's unmet financial need for a semester or term or the difference between the amount of tuition and required fees incurred by the student at an eligible institution for a semester or term plus a textbook stipend in an amount determined by the coordinating board and the amount of the Pell grant for which the student is eligible, if any.

H.B. 653 changes the exception to the prohibition against the amount of a program grant being reduced by any gift aid for which the recipient is eligible from the total amount of the grant plus any gift aid received exceeding the total cost of attendance at an eligible institution to the total amount of the grant plus any gift aid exceeding the student's financial need. The bill replaces a Pell grant with a work-study program as an available source of financial aid excluded from sources an institution may use to cover any difference in the amount of a program grant and the actual amount of tuition and required fees at the institution.

H.B. 653 repeals the provision authorizing the coordinating board to adopt rules that allow the coordinating board to proportionally increase or decrease the amount of a program grant award to a student enrolled in a number of semester credit hours in excess of or below a number constituting at least one-half of a full course load and the provision requiring the coordinating board to annually publish the amounts of each grant established by the coordinating board for the academic year beginning the next fall semester. The bill applies to participation in the grant program beginning with the 2018-2019 academic year.

H.B. 653 repeals Sections 56.407(b) and (d), Education Code.

**EFFECTIVE DATE**

January 1, 2018.