

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 214
By: Thierry
Higher Education
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

According to a survey by The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice, homelessness affected 18 percent of respondents attending two-year colleges and 14 percent of respondents attending four-year institutions. It has been noted that students who are experiencing homelessness face additional barriers in accessing higher education and that combating homelessness can improve outcomes for these students, including matriculation rates, retention rates, and four-year graduation rates. H.B. 214 seeks to address these issues by extending liaison officer services currently provided to students at public institutions of higher education who were in foster care to students who are homeless. The bill also provides for certain housing assistance and priority access to student housing for this student population.

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. 214 amends the Education Code to require a public institution of higher education and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) to designate at least one employee of the institution or the THECB, respectively, as a liaison officer for current and incoming students who are homeless. An institution or the THECB, as applicable, may designate for that role the same employee or employees designated to act as liaison officer for students who are or were in the conservatorship of the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) or may designate one or more different employees to act as liaison officer for each of those student populations separately. The bill defines "students who are homeless" by reference to federal law and includes in the term students who reside in a student housing facility maintained by an institution during an academic term but who are homeless between academic terms. The bill requires each institution, to the extent allowed by state or federal law, to identify students who are homeless from information provided to the institution in admission or financial aid applications or other available resources.

H.B. 214 sets out the following provisions relating to the duties of a liaison officer:

- extends the duties of a liaison officer designated by an institution of higher education or by the THECB to serve students who were in DFPS conservatorship to apply to a liaison officer for students who are homeless or a liaison officer serving both student populations, with respect to the students for whom the liaison officer is designated; and

- specifies that the information regarding support services to be provided to both student populations by the appropriate liaison officer or officers designated by an institution of higher education includes information about financial aid, on-campus and off-campus housing, food and meal programs, and counseling services.

H.B. 214 makes a student who is homeless and meets other applicable criteria eligible to receive certain assistance from an institution of higher education in locating temporary housing between academic terms. The bill requires each institution that maintains student housing facilities to give priority in the assignment of housing in those facilities to students who are homeless. The bill applies beginning with the 2021-2022 academic year.

EFFECTIVE DATE

On passage, or, if the bill does not receive the necessary vote, September 1, 2021.