

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

H.B. 981  
By: Dutton  
Higher Education  
Committee Report (Unamended)

### **BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE**

Concerns have been raised that no public college or university in Texas currently offers a bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree in the study of religion or divinity and that students must go out of state or to a private institution in order to pursue such a field of study. There have been calls for Texas Southern University to become the first public university in Texas to offer a divinity program, furthering its mission to offer innovative programs that are responsive to its urban setting. H.B. 981 seeks to respond to those calls by providing for a study on the feasibility of establishing a divinity program at Texas Southern University.

### **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. 981 amends the Education Code to require the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) to conduct a study on the feasibility of establishing a divinity program that offers bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees at Texas Southern University. The bill requires the THECB, not later than December 1, 2022, to submit to the university's board of regents and each legislative standing committee with primary jurisdiction over higher education a report on the results of the study.

### **EFFECTIVE DATE**

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