

SUBJECT: Revising foster child eligibility for tuition exemptions

COMMITTEE: Higher Education — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 6 ayes — Rangel, Bailey, Cuellar, Dunnam, Kamel, E. Reyna
0 nays
3 absent— Solis, Rabuck, Rodriguez

WITNESSES: For — Sammye Ruppek
Against — None

BACKGROUND : Children in foster care or other residential care overseen by the Department of Protective and Regulatory Services (DPRS) are exempt from tuition and fees at public colleges, universities, and vocational schools once they turn 18. Students are required to enroll in an institution of higher education no more than three years after being discharged from DPRS care.

DIGEST: HB 767 would exempt students in foster or other residential DPRS care from paying tuition and fees at a public institution of higher education when they graduate from high school or receive the equivalent of a high school diploma. Such students would have to enroll no later than three years after graduating or receiving an equivalency diploma.

HB 767 would take immediate effect if finally approved by a record two-thirds vote of the membership of each house. Its provisions would apply beginning with the fall 1997 semester.

SUPPORTERS SAY: HB 767 would remedy a glitch in the Education Code that prevents DPRS charges from going straight to college if they have not yet reached 18. This problem affects about 25 youths per year. These students have two options if they wish to take advantage of the tuition and fee exemption, neither of them good: they can stay in foster care until they turn 18 and continue to be supported by the state; or they can leave foster care, often interrupting the momentum of their academic career and effectively ending their education.

HB 767
House Research Organization
page 2

Texas cannot afford to discourage any of its citizens from pursuing higher education, particularly children for whom it has assumed responsibility. It has long been state practice to assure youths in foster care access to education. HB 767 would guarantee that the intent of existing law was effectively implemented.

OPPONENTS
SAY:

No apparent opposition.