

SUBJECT: Making dental hygiene degree program at Tyler Junior College permanent

COMMITTEE: Higher Education — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 9 ayes — Lozano, Raney, Alonzo, Alvarado, Button, Clardy, Howard, Morrison, Turner

0 nays

WITNESSES: For — Kristy Howell; Cherish McCoy; (*Registered, but did not testify:* Dustin Meador, Texas Association of Community Colleges)

Against — None

On — Rex Peebles, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board; Patricia Nunn, Texas Woman's University; Carrie Hobbs and Juan Mejia, Tyler Junior College; (*Registered, but did not testify:* Sarah Van Cleef, Tyler Junior College)

BACKGROUND: The 84th Legislature in 2015 enacted HB 3348 by Clardy, which established a bachelor's degree pilot program in dental hygiene at Tyler Junior College.

DIGEST: HB 832 would remove the pilot status of a dental hygiene bachelor's degree program at a public junior college described by the bill (Tyler Junior College) and allow the program to operate as a permanent program. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board would be required to recommend to the Legislature that junior- and senior-level courses in the public junior college's dental hygiene bachelor's degree program receive substantially the same state funding for junior- and senior-level courses at a general academic teaching institution for substantially similar courses.

The bill would repeal the requirement for the coordinating board's submission of a progress report on the dental hygiene bachelor's degree pilot program. The coordinating board's funding recommendations would apply beginning in fiscal 2020.

This bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house. Otherwise, it would take effect September 1, 2017.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

HB 832 would continue Tyler Junior College's dental hygiene bachelor's degree pilot program as a permanent program, which would help address workforce shortages and consumer access to quality dental health care in East Texas. The bill would not place a financial burden on Tyler Junior College because it would secure state funding for the permanent program, providing more opportunities for students to advance their careers, enhance their leadership skills, and meet a tangible need in their community.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

HB 832 could place a financial and administrative burden on Tyler Junior College to cover operating costs as it transitions to a permanent state-funded program.

NOTES:

In its fiscal note, the Legislative Budget Board projects a cost to general revenue from increased formula funding due to additional students enrolling in the program, but this cost would not appear until at least fiscal 2020.

A companion bill, SB 834 by Hughes, was referred to the Senate Higher Education Committee on February 27.