

- SUBJECT:** Notifying foster children of higher education tuition and fee waivers
- COMMITTEE:** Human Services — favorable, without amendment
- VOTE:** 7 ayes — Raymond, Frank, Keough, Miller, Minjarez, Rose, Swanson
- 0 nays
- 2 absent — Klick, Wu
- WITNESSES:** For — (*Registered but did not testify*: Will Francis, National Association of Social Workers-Texas Chapter; Kate Murphy, Texans Care for Children; Kathryn Freeman, Texas Baptists Christian Life Commission; Jennifer Allmon, Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops; Sarah Crockett, Texas CASA; Joshua Houston, Texas Impact; Dimple Patel, TexProtects; James Thurston, United Ways of Texas; Knox Kimberly, Upbring; Cecilia Wood)
- Against — None
- On — Elizabeth "Liz" Kromrei, Department of Family and Protective Services; Jerel Booker, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
- BACKGROUND:** Education Code, sec. 54.366 exempts certain children who have been under the conservatorship of the Department of Family and Protective Services from paying tuition and fees for higher education, including dual-credit courses or other courses where high school students earn joint high school and college credit. Sec. 54.367 exempts certain children who were adopted and formerly in foster care from paying tuition and fees charged by an institution of higher education, including for dual credit courses for high school students.
- Government Code, sec. 531.055 requires each health and human services agency, the Texas Correctional Office on Offenders with Medical or Mental Impairments, Texas Department of Criminal Justice, Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs, Texas Workforce

Commission, and the Texas Juvenile Justice Department to enter into a joint memorandum of understanding to promote a system of local-level interagency staffing groups to coordinate services for persons needing multiagency services.

DIGEST:

HB 928 would require the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) representative of an interagency community resource coordination group to inform other members of the group that higher education tuition and fee waivers were available to children in foster care or who were adopted out of the foster care system.

The bill also would require a DFPS representative of the group to collaborate with high school superintendents and counselors in districts served by the group to identify foster and adopted children who were eligible for higher education tuition and fee waivers. After identifying eligible children, the DFPS representative would have to assist the child's transition to an institution of higher education by:

- assisting with the completion of applications for admission or financial aid;
- arranging and accompanying the child on campus visits;
- assisting in researching and applying for private or institution-sponsored scholarships;
- identifying whether the child was a candidate for appointment to a military academy; and
- assisting the child in registering and preparing for college entrance examinations, including arranging for the payment of any examination fees.

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 928 would increase awareness of Texas' tuition and fee waiver program for eligible foster children. The program is underutilized because many foster children do not know that the program exists or lack guidance

throughout the program process.

Requiring the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) to identify and assist eligible foster youth with the college application process could prevent members of this vulnerable population from falling through the cracks and encourage more children to take advantage of tuition and fee waivers they are entitled to under current law.

OPPONENTS
SAY:

Although HB 928 is well intentioned, the bill could increase the financial and administrative burden for DFPS. The department may lack sufficient staffing resources to collaborate with more than 1,200 school districts' superintendents and school counselors in Texas.

Requiring DFPS to assist adopted children who formerly were in foster care with the college application process is unnecessary. That role could be filled by an adopted child's parents. Attempts by DFPS to facilitate an adopted child's college application process could interfere with the privacy of the child's family.

NOTES:

According to the Legislative Budget Board's fiscal note, HB 928 would have a negative impact of \$2.1 million in general revenue related funds in fiscal 2018-19 and \$1 million each year thereafter. It is assumed DFPS would require 12 additional community engagement specialist positions to coordinate with the 1,247 school districts across the state and to provide subsequent transition services to eligible foster care and adopted children.