

SUBJECT: Expanding qualifications for the Texas Tuition Equalization Program

COMMITTEE: Higher Education — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 8 ayes — C. Turner, Stucky, Button, Frullo, Howard, Schaefer, Smithee, Walle

0 nays

3 absent — E. Johnson, Pacheco, Wilson

SENATE VOTE: On final passage, April 17 — 30-1 (Schwertner)

WITNESSES: For — Ray Martinez, Independent Colleges and Universities of Texas; Kizuwanda Grant, Paul Quinn College

Against — None

On — (*Registered, but did not testify:* Charles Puls, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board)

BACKGROUND: Education Code sec. 61.221 allows the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) to provide tuition equalization grants to Texas residents enrolled in any approved private Texas college or university.

Sec. 61.222 establishes eligibility requirements for the approval of private or independent institutions of higher education for this purpose, including that they must hold the same program standards and accreditation as public institutions of higher education.

The coordinating board may temporarily approve a private or independent institution that previously held, but no longer holds, the same accreditation as public institutions to participate in the tuition equalization grants program if the institution meets certain criteria. Temporary approval may be granted for a two-year period and can be renewed twice.

Interested parties have called for eligibility requirements for tuition equalization grants to be expanded to include federally recognized work colleges that have lost the required regional accreditation status but have retained state-recognized national accreditation status.

DIGEST: SB 1680 would require the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to approve for the purposes of tuition equalization grants private or independent institution of higher education that previously qualified for the program but no longer held the same accreditation as public institutions of higher education if the institution was:

- accredited by an accreditor recognized by the coordinating board;
- a work college, as defined by federal law; and
- participating in the federal Pell Grant Program.

The 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, 2019.