

SUBJECT: Grant program for regional postsecondary education collaboratives

COMMITTEE: Higher Education — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 10 ayes — Murphy, Pacheco, Cortez, P. King, Muñoz, Ortega, Parker, Raney, C. Turner, J. Turner

0 nays

1 absent — Frullo

WITNESSES: For — Todd Williams, Commit Partnership; Usamah Rodgers, Dallas ISD; Justin Yancy, Texas Business Leadership Council; Jonathan Feinstein, The Education Trust in Texas; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Priscilla Camacho, Alamo Colleges District; Dana Harris, Austin Chamber of Commerce; Matthew Garcia, Dallas Regional Chamber; CJ Tredway, Independent Electrical Contractors of Texas; Chris Walters, Texas 2036; Dustin Meador, Texas Association of Community Colleges; Mike Meroney, Texas Association of Manufacturers; Molly Weiner, United Ways of Texas; John Pitts, Jr, Western Governors University - Texas)

Against — None

On — Cesar Maldonado, Houston Community College; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Ray Martinez, Higher Education Coordinating Board; Brenda Hellyer, San Jacinto College)

BACKGROUND: Interested parties suggest that a competitive grant program for collaborations between school districts and community colleges would provide financial and other assistance to help low-income high school graduates enroll and complete a postsecondary degree or certificate.

DIGEST: CSHB 2030 would require the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to establish and administer a competitive grant program for eligible regional postsecondary education collaboratives to improve outcomes for

low-income students. A regional postsecondary education collaborative would mean a partnership or other collaboration between stakeholders in education that focused on improving postsecondary outcomes in a region of the state. A low-income student would mean a student who was eligible to receive a federal Pell Grant or who had equivalent need, as determined by coordinating board rule.

The board would have to implement the grant program only if federal funding was provided for that purpose as part of any federal coronavirus disease relief spending appropriated on or after January 1, 2021. If such funding was not provided, the board could, but would not be required to, implement the grant program using other money available for that purpose.

Awarding grants. The board would have to give priority in awarding grants to eligible regional collaboratives that focused on supporting low-income students or had a demonstrated connection to targeted workforce fields, as determined by the board. It would have to begin awarding grants for the first academic year for which federal funding was appropriated for that purpose.

Eligibility. A regional postsecondary education collaborative would be eligible to receive a grant if it:

- included at least one school district and public junior college;
- raised a minimum amount of funding from other sources for its costs, as established by board rule;
- developed and submitted to the board a plan detailing how it would use grant funds as permitted by the bill;
- built partnerships committed to changing postsecondary education systems and improving outcomes through the use of data, mutual accountability, and engagement between a student and the student's community;
- measured the collaborative's success by achievement of increasing enrollment and completion at any public or private institution of higher education and career entry;

- provided personalized outreach to students and parents or caregivers;
- provided proactive, holistic supports to assist students in postsecondary persistence and completion and in connecting with employers; and
- satisfied any additional requirements established by coordinating board rule.

Grant use. A grant awarded to a collaborative could be used only for:

- staff support for the collaborative;
- student services designed to increase postsecondary enrollment, persistence, and completion;
- student financial assistance;
- programs that provided training for jobs in targeted workforce fields, as determined by the board; and
- other expenses approved by the board.

Grant amount. A grant amount awarded to an eligible collaborative would have to be made for a period sufficient to cover the enrollment in, persistence in, and timely completion of a certificate or degree program for two consecutive cohorts of students.

For each student cohort, each grant would consist of an initial amount at the beginning of the first academic year for which the grant was awarded, equal to \$1,000 for each low-income student who graduated in the preceding year from a high school participating in the collaborative and enrolled at an institution of higher education for that academic year.

At the end of each academic year for which the grant was awarded, a bonus amount per student would be awarded for each student who persisted at a higher education institution or who timely completed a certificate or degree program at a higher education institution. The coordinating board would by rule determine what constituted persistence and timely completion. The amount of the bonus per student for persistence would be determined by dividing \$25 million by the number

of qualifying students, and the amount of the bonus for timely completion would be determined by dividing \$20 million by the number of qualifying students. The amount of a bonus could not exceed \$2,000 per student.

Reporting. CSHB 2030 would require each regional postsecondary educational collaborative that received a grant to report certain information to the coordinating board. Not later than December 1 of each year, the board would submit a report to the Legislature on the effectiveness of the grant program and any recommendations for legislative or other action.

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, 2021.

NOTES:

The House-passed version of SB 1 by Nelson (Bonnen), the general appropriations act for fiscal 2022-23, includes \$100 million in Art. 11 as a contingency for the bill.