SUBJECT: Extending eligibility for certain student loan repayment programs

COMMITTEE: Higher Education — favorable, without amendment

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

0 nays

1 absent — C. Turner

WITNESSES: For — Kimberly Kelly-Cortez, Western Governors University Texas; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Joshua Massingill, LeadingAge Texas; Gilbert Zavala, The Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce)

Against — None

On — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Priscilla Camacho, Alamo Colleges District)

BACKGROUND: Calls have been made to extend the eligibility of certain financial assistance programs currently available to schools accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges so that other students at certain nonprofit, tax-exempt, regionally accredited colleges or universities could benefit from those programs.

DIGEST: HB 546 would extend eligibility for certain educational loan repayment assistance programs to a student at a nonprofit, tax-exempt, regionally accredited college or university operating in accordance with a memorandum of understanding with the state under an executive order of the governor.

The extension of eligibility would apply to the following state programs:

- repayment assistance for certain mental health professionals;
- the professional nursing shortage reduction program;

- the Texas hospital-based nursing education partnership grant program; and
- the nursing faculty loan repayment assistance program.

The bill would require the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to adopt any rules necessary to administer the bill's provisions.

The board could not award grants under the bill's provisions related to the professional nursing shortage reduction program before June 1, 2023.

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.