

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
79R857 KSD-D

S.B. 31
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S/C on Higher Education
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As Filed

AUTHOR'S/SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Currently, students in Texas public institutions of higher education are taking longer to complete their baccalaureate degree programs. This increases the cost of education, both to students and to the state, and negatively impacts graduation rates. There is considerable variation among the eligibility criteria for state financial aid programs, which causes confusion among parents and students regarding their access to state funding. Further, this problem does not encourage students to graduate in a timely manner.

As proposed, S.B. 31 promotes more timely graduation by streamlining the financial aid criteria to encourage students to take heavier course loads.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority previously granted to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board is modified in SECTION 2 (Section 56.305, Education Code) of this bill. Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in SECTION 4 (Section 61.225, Education Code) of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Section 56.304(e), Education Code, to provide that a person is not eligible to receive a TEXAS grant for any term or semester in which the person is not awarded a certificate or degree from an eligible institution within the applicable period prescribed by Section 56.462 to qualify for forgiveness of a Texas B-On-Time loan unless the person is provided additional time. Deletes existing text related to a specific timeframe within which a person's eligibility for a TEXAS grant expires.

SECTION 2. Amends Sections 56.305(e) and (g), Education Code, as follows:

(e) Provides that, for the purposes of this section, a person makes satisfactory academic progress toward an undergraduate degree or certificate only if the person completes at least 30, rather than 75 percent of, semester credit hours in the student's most recent academic year. Makes nonsubstantive changes.

(g) Requires the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (coordinating board) to adopt rules to allow a person who is otherwise eligible to receive a TEXAS grant, but shows good cause that certain conditions might affect the person's academic performance, to receive a TEXAS grant if the student's grade point average or the number of semester credit hours complete by the student, rather than completion rate, falls below the satisfactory academic progress requirements of Subsection (e).

SECTION 3. Amends Section 56.462, Education Code, to provide that a student who receives a Texas B-On-Time loan will be forgiven the amount of the student's loan if the student is awarded an undergraduate certificate or degree with a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.0 on a four-point scale or the equivalent with a total number of semester credit hours, including transfer credit hours and excluding hours earned exclusively by examination and hours earned for a course for which the student received credit toward the student's high school academic requirements, that is not more than six hours more than the minimum number of semester credit hours required to complete the certificate or degree.

SECTION 4. Amends Section 61.225, Education Code, as follows:

Sec. 61.225. New Heading: ELIGIBILITY FOR GRANT. (a) Requires a person to meet certain requirements in order to be eligible for a tuition equalization grant in the first academic year in which the person receives the grant. Makes a conforming change.

(b) Authorizes a person, after qualifying for a tuition equalization grant, to receive a tuition equalization grant in a subsequent academic year in which the person is enrolled at an approved institution if the person meets certain requirements.

(c) Provides that a person is not eligible to receive a tuition equalization grant if they do not qualify for forgiveness of a Texas B-On-Time loan, notwithstanding Subsections (a) and (b).

(d) Requires the coordinating board to adopt rules to allow a person who is otherwise eligible to receive a tuition equalization grant, in the event of a hardship or for other good cause shown, to receive a tuition equalization grant if the person does not meet certain requirements.

SECTION 5. Makes application of this Act prospective.

SECTION 6. Effective date: September 1, 2005.