

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

S.B. 2079
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Higher Education
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As Filed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Businesses have complained that grade inflation has rendered transcripts less than helpful as a means of appraising college graduates' job applications, due to the fact that since the 1960s, the percentage of As given has risen from 15 percent nationwide to the most common grade given in college (45 percent); nearly 75 percent of all college grades are either As or Bs. The result is a hindered hiring process, workforce competition, and ability of graduate school admission boards to differentiate meaningfully across student transcripts. However, businesses would not be the only beneficiaries of such legislation; Texas students would benefit in that they would be taken more seriously as employers and graduate admissions committees would welcome the greater information.

S.B. 2079 requires a student's postsecondary transcript to include the average or median grade awarded in each class. It does not apply to classes offered to students solely on a pass-fail basis or for independent study credit, or in which grades are reported for 10 students or fewer. S.B. 2079 is not a form of legislative micromanagement of public universities, but rather, a transparency measure for students, parents, businesses, and taxpayers. The chief purpose of the proposed legislation is to enhance the competitiveness of Texas public university students.

As proposed, S.B. 2079 amends current law relating to a requirement that a student's postsecondary transcript include the average or median grade awarded in each class.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in SECTION 1 (Section 51.979, Education Code) of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Subchapter Z, Chapter 51, Education Code, by adding Section 51.979, as follows:

Sec. 51.979. TRANSPARENCY IN STUDENT TRANSCRIPTS. (a) Defines "general academic teaching institution."

(b) Requires each general academic teaching institution (institution) to include on a student's transcript, for each class attempted by the student, the average grade that was awarded to all students in the class. Requires the institution to, for a class for which letter grades are awarded, include on the transcript the median grade that was awarded to all students in the class. Requires the institution to place the average or median grade, as applicable, immediately to the right of the student's individual grade.

(c) Provides that Subsection (b) does not apply to a class offered to students solely on a pass-fail basis or for independent study credit or in which grades are reported for 10 students or fewer.

(d) Requires the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) to adopt rules to administer this section.

SECTION 2. Requires THECB to adopt the rules required by Section 51.979, Education Code, as added by this Act, as soon as practicable after this Act takes effect. Authorizes THECB to, for that purpose, adopt the initial rules in the manner provided by law for emergency rules.

SECTION 3. Provides that the change in law made by this Act applies beginning with the 2017 fall semester.

SECTION 4. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2017.