

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
86R15847 SOS-F

H.B. 539
By: Leman et al. (Kolkhorst)
Higher Education
5/6/2019
Engrossed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Currently, students who graduate in the top 10 percent of their graduating class are automatically accepted into all state-funded universities under the "Top 10 Percent Law." However, students who graduate in a class of less than 10 students are at risk of not being automatically accepted into all state-funded universities. In the 2016–2017 school year alone, there were at least 130 schools all across the state that had a graduating class of 10 students or fewer.

H.B. 539 would amend the Education Code to make it such that valedictorians, regardless of the size of their graduating class, are guaranteed automatic admission into all state-funded universities in Texas. In order to be automatically admitted, valedictorians must still meet all the other admission requirements to get into that university. H.B. 539 also ensures that a student who graduated from a public or accredited private high school in Texas as the valedictorian of the student's graduating class is eligible to be considered for any scholarships offered to students graduating in the top 10 percent of their high school class so long as all the other requirements are met.

H.B. 539 amends current law relating to the automatic admission to general academic teaching institutions and eligibility for certain scholarships of a student who is the valedictorian of the student's high school graduating class.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Section 51.803, Education Code, by adding Subsection (d-1) and amending Subsection (h), as follows:

(d-1) Requires each general academic teaching institution, in addition to admissions required under Subsection (a) (relating to automatic admission for student in the top 10 percent of their high school graduating class), to admit an applicant for admission to the institution as an undergraduate student if the applicant graduated as the valedictorian of the student's high school graduating class in one of the two school years preceding the academic year for which the student is applying for admission and if the applicant satisfies the requirements of Subsections (a)(1)–(3) (relating to automatic admission for certain applicants). Provides that Subsection (b) (relating to certain students being considered as having satisfied certain requirements if the student completed the portion of the distinguished level of achievement under the foundation high school program curriculum or of the curriculum equivalent in content and rigor, as applicable, that was available to the student) applies to an applicant for admission under this subsection. Provides that an applicant admitted under this subsection is considered automatically admitted for purposes of Subsection (a), (a-1), or (a-2), as applicable.

(h) Authorizes an institution that admits under this section (Automatic Admission: All Institutions) an applicant qualified for automatic admission under Subsection (a) or (d-1), rather than Subsection (a), to admit the applicant for either the fall semester of the

academic year for which the applicant applies or for the summer session preceding that fall semester, as determined by the institution.

SECTION 2. Amends Section 56.484, Education Code, as follows:

Sec. 56.484. INITIAL ELIGIBILITY FOR SCHOLARSHIP. Requires a student, to be eligible for a scholarship under this subchapter (Scholarships For Students Graduating in Top 10 Percent of High School Class), to have graduated from a public or accredited private high school in this state while ranked in the top 10 percent or as the valedictorian, rather than ranked in the top 10 percent, of the student's graduating class, subject to Section 56.487(b) (relating to authorizing the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to permit a student to establish initial eligibility based on certain criteria) and to meet certain other criteria.

SECTION 3. Provides that the changes in law made by this Act to Section 51.803, Education Code, apply beginning with admissions to a general academic teaching institution for the 2019–2020 academic year. Provides that admissions to a general academic teaching institution for an academic year before that academic year are governed by the law in effect immediately before the effective date of this Act, and the former law is continued in effect for that purpose.

SECTION 4. Provides that the change in law made by this Act to Section 56.484, Education Code, applies beginning with scholarships awarded for the 2019–2020 academic year. Provides that scholarships awarded for an academic year before that academic year are governed by the law in effect immediately before the effective date of this Act, and the former law is continued in effect for that purpose.

SECTION 5. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2019.