

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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S.B. 1441
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Higher Education
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As Filed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Texas has the second highest percentage of adults age 25 or older without a high school degree. A high school diploma or equivalent is required for most jobs, affects lifelong earnings, and influences economic mobility. According to United States Census data, adult Texans without a high school diploma or equivalent earn significantly less annually (\$21,362) than those with higher levels of education (\$28,000 or greater).

Persons who do not earn a high school diploma can take an assessment to earn their Texas Certificate of High School Equivalency (TxCHSE). The most widely known assessment is the General Educational Development (GED) test. The GED was, for years, the only way to earn the high school equivalency credential. There are, however, virtually no data tracking the long-term outcomes of GED test takers and TxCHSE recipients. In 2014, the GED was updated, making it more difficult to pass. In light of this, other entities introduced their own versions of the GED test, and both are recognized by the Texas Education Agency as valid equivalency exams. Currently, there are no data from which to assess the long-term success of persons who take any of the three tests. It would be useful information to policymakers if, for example, one test led to better outcomes in higher education than the other two.

S.B. 1441 would direct the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to conduct a study comparing the outcomes of students who graduate high school with those who complete a high school equivalency examination, disaggregated by which exam they took. Such information would be beneficial to students, institutions, test preparatory programs, and policymakers alike.

As proposed, S.B. 1441 amends current law relating to a study by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board comparing postsecondary educational outcomes for certain traditional and nontraditional students.

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 Subchapter C, Chapter 61, Education Code, by adding Section 61.06692, as follows:

Sec. 61.06692. STUDY COMPARING POSTSECONDARY EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES FOR CERTAIN TRADITIONAL AND NONTRADITIONAL STUDENTS. (a) Requires the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) to conduct a study comparing postsecondary educational outcomes for students enrolled at institutions of higher education who received a high school diploma and students enrolled at those institutions who received a high school equivalency certificate, disaggregated by the high school equivalency examination completed.

(b) Requires THECB, not later than December 1, 2020, to submit to the governor, the lieutenant governor, and the speaker of the house of representatives a report

on the results of the study and any recommendations for legislative or other action.

(c) Provides that this section expires September 1, 2021.

SECTION 2. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2019.