

HB 2835 -1 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Joint Committee On Ways and Means

Prepared By: Tim Walker, Fiscal Analyst

Meeting Dates: 6/8

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Defines "benefits navigator" as person trained to assist students with applying for and receiving need-based financial benefits provided by federal, state and local programs. Requires each public university and community college to train and employ benefits navigators. Appropriates moneys from General Fund to Higher Education Coordinating Commission to be distributed to each public university and community college for hiring benefits navigators. Requires each public university and community college to participate in statewide consortium for benefits navigators to develop best practices and facilitate communication. Requires each public university and community college to develop process for student feedback and improvement on delivering benefit assistance. Declares emergency, effective on passage.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Rates of housing and food insecurity among students
- Experiences of affected students
- Student usage of public assistance programs
- Stigma associated with public assistance programs
- Purpose of benefits navigators
- Cost and characteristics of proposed program
- Role of financial aid offices in assisting students
- Results of alternatives that were attempted

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

-1 The amendment appropriates \$4,999,150 General Fund to the Higher Education Coordinating Commission for the purposes of the bill.

BACKGROUND:

Many students at institutions of higher education face challenges in affording basic needs while receiving their education. Students have reported higher than average rates of food insecurity. These students may be eligible for need-based public assistance programs, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or Medicaid. Additional local programs may offer housing assistance, childcare, or financial assistance for textbooks.

House Bill 2835 requires each public university and community college to train and employ a benefits navigator who will assist students with determining eligibility and applying for public assistance benefits, and establishes related requirements.