

SUBJECT: Job training funds for recipients of public assistance

COMMITTEE: Economic Development — favorable, with amendment

VOTE: 5 ayes — Yarbrough, Greenberg, Keffer, Raymond, Seaman

0 nays

4 absent — Oliveira, Luna, Siebert, Van de Putte

SENATE VOTE: On final passage, May 13 — 28-0

WITNESSES: No public hearing

BACKGROUND : The Skills Development Fund was created in 1995 to provide through educational institutions customized training programs for Texas businesses. The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) uses the fund for grants to public community and technical colleges developing workforce training programs for businesses and trade unions to sponsor small and medium-sized business networks and consortia.

DIGEST: SB 1491, as amended, would create a self-sufficiency fund for use by public community and technical colleges, community-based organizations, and state extension agencies to develop customized job-training programs for welfare recipients and businesses and trade unions and to sponsor small and medium-sized business networks and consortiums. Employers who participated in setting program curricula and standards would commit to hire graduates of the training programs.

Job training programs funded by the self-sufficiency fund would be required to help recipients find and apply for existing jobs. Funds could be used for support services to prepare participants to take part in training activities and make the transition to employment. SB 1491 would encourage fund resources to be distributed throughout the state.

An entity that received money from the fund would have to ensure program participants met state and federal work requirements and work with employers to place program graduates in jobs with wages that would make

them independent of public financial assistance programs. Participants would automatically meet criteria set up for the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS) program.

The fund would be administered by the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC). The executive director would develop program criteria for the program.

SB 1491 also would allow monies from the Skills Development Fund to be used as grants for training and apprenticeship programs in supportive health care work for recipients of public assistance. The bill would require the TWC to establish a pilot program to provide grants to public community and technical colleges that had partnerships with public or private hospitals, hospital districts, or other health-related businesses. The pilot program would expire September 1, 1999. The commission would have to report on the pilot program to the 76th Legislature.

Block grant funding for local workforce development boards would not apply to a program funded by the self-sufficiency fund.

SB 1491 would take immediate effect if finally approved by two-thirds record vote of the membership in each house.

NOTES:

The committee amendment would incorporate HB 3259 by Coleman, a grant program for allied health profession training, and stipulate that block grant funding for local workforce development boards would not apply to a program funded by the self-sufficiency fund.