

SUBJECT: Offering additional benefits to nursing faculty

COMMITTEE: Higher Education — favorable, with amendment

VOTE: 7 ayes — Morrison, Goolsby, F. Brown, Dawson, Harper-Brown, J. Jones, Rose

0 nays

2 absent — Gallego, Giddings

SENATE VOTE: On final passage, April 28 — 31-0, on Local and Uncontested Calendar

WITNESSES: None

BACKGROUND: In 2001, the 77th Legislature enacted SB 572 by Moncrief, which created two grant programs for nursing students and faculty. The legislation was designed to help address a nursing shortage in the state. While Texas hospitals have reported difficulty recruiting nurses, the average age of the nursing population also indicates that the problem will be exacerbated by a large number of nurses retiring in the future.

DIGEST: SB 132, as amended, would offer incentives to nursing faculty, including tuition reductions for their children, enhancement funds, and mortgages through the Texas State Affordable Housing Corporation.

The bill would exempt from higher education tuition for up to 10 semesters an undergraduate resident who had not yet received a baccalaureate degree and who was the child of a degreed nurse who was a full-time faculty, staff, or teaching assistant of a professional nursing program. Part-time employment of one-quarter time and above would qualify the child for a reduction in tuition on a pro rata basis. Eligible recipients would be eligible for a refund of up to three years' prior tuition.

SB 132 also would establish a \$500 tuition reduction for up to 10 semesters for resident registered nurses who had not received a

baccalaureate degree and who served in a preceptor program, as well as

their undergraduate student children.

Nursing shortage grant funds could be used for enhancement funds to encourage recruitment and retention of nursing faculty, identify methods that make the most efficient use of existing faculty, use preceptors for clinical instruction, and share administrative personnel and other resources among programs. The bill also would permit retired nursing faculty to return to work and receive retirement benefits between 2005 and 2015.

Nurse educators would be eligible for low-interest mortgages through the Texas State Affordable Housing Corporation under Government Code, ch. 1372, through September 1, 2016. This provision would take effect September 1, 2005.

The statewide health coordinating council and Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board would develop a strategic plan to determine the number of nurses needed in the state and report to the Legislature by January 1, 2007. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board also would develop strategies for increasing graduation rates from nursing programs and report to the Legislature.

The bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house. Otherwise, it would take effect September 1, 2005.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

SB 132 would take the state's efforts to address the nursing shortage one step further. Texas still needs more nurses and the grant programs are working, but the education programs do not have sufficient resources to enroll the number of students the state will need in the future. The options offered in this bill are similar to benefits offered to fire fighters, police officers, and other professions that are vital to Texas.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

No apparent opposition.

NOTES: The committee amendment would provide incentives to nursing faculty, including tuition reductions for their children, enhancement funds, and mortgages through the Texas State Affordable Housing Corporation.