

- SUBJECT:** Changing the requirements for a teacher loan repayment program
- COMMITTEE:** Higher Education — favorable, without amendment
- VOTE:** 8 ayes — C. Turner, Stucky, Button, Frullo, Pacheco, Schaefer, Smithee, Wilson
- 0 nays
- 3 absent — Howard, E. Johnson, Walle
- SENATE VOTE:** On final passage, April 29 — 29-2 (Hall, Kolkhorst)
- WITNESSES:** For — (*Registered, but did not testify:* Andrea Chevalier, Association of Texas Professional Educators; Julia Parenteau, Texas Realtors)
- Against — None
- On — (*Registered, but did not testify:* Charles Puls, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board)
- BACKGROUND:** Education Code ch. 61, subch. KK governs the Math and Science Scholars Loan Repayment Program, which provides assistance in the repayment of eligible student loans for persons agreeing to teach mathematics or science for a specific period in schools that receive federal funding under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965.
- Sec. 61.9832 imposes certain eligibility requirements on participants in the program, including that they have a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.5 on a 4.0 point scale, or its equivalent, and that they teach for four years at any public school in the state after completing four years teaching at a Title I school.
- DIGEST:** SB 1757 would change the cumulative grade point average required in order to receive loan payment assistance under the Math and Science Scholars Loan Repayment Program to 3.0 on a 4.0 scale, or its equivalent.

The bill also would allow the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to determine by rule the number of years, up to four, that a participant in the program would be required to teach at any public school in the state after completing four years of teaching at a Title I school.

The board would have to institute rules necessary to administer the provisions of the bill as soon as practicable after the effective date of the bill.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2019, and would apply only to a loan payment assistance program entered into on or after that date.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

SB 1757 would increase the number of teachers that qualified for and benefited from the Math and Science Scholars Loan Repayment Program, improving recruitment and retention of math and science teachers in Texas.

A majority of those who applied for the program in the past two years were rejected, nearly half because they did not meet the GPA requirement. Setting the required GPA at 3.0 rather than 3.5 would enable more people to take advantage of the program, which could help the state address its need for qualified teachers. A 3.0 GPA is still a sign of high aptitude, and every applicant accepted into the program would be have to be certified to teach.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

SB 1757 would lower the standards for the Math and Sciences Scholars Loan Repayment Program because not enough applicants are able to meet the standards. This would not be a good approach for recruiting and retaining the most talented individuals to teach math and science to the children of Texas.