

SUBJECT: Revising eligibility for Teach for Texas student loan repayment assistance

COMMITTEE: Higher Education — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 8 ayes — Kuempel, Paul, Bucy, Burns, Burrows, Clardy, Howard, Lalani
0 nays
3 absent — Cole, M. González, Raney

WITNESSES: For — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Hannah Gill, NAMI Texas; Gilbert Zavala, Opportunity Austin; Rebekah Calahan, Philanthropy Advocates; Eli Melendrez, Texas American Federation of Teachers; Amy Beneski, Texas Association of School Administrators & Texas Association of Community Schools; Lauren Rose, Texas Network of Youth Services; Linda Litzinger, Texas Parent to Parent; Suzi Kennon, Texas PTA; Travis Krogman, The Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce; Naomi Cruz, Young Invincibles)

Against — None

On — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Shannon Doyle, National Association of Social Workers - Texas Chapter)

BACKGROUND: Some have suggested that incentivizing people interested in providing mental health services in schools with loan repayment assistance could address the shortage of school mental health professionals.

DIGEST: HB 3140 would amend the purpose of the Teach for Texas Loan Repayment Assistance Program to include attracting to the school mental health profession any persons who expressed interest in providing mental health services to students enrolled in public schools and supporting the employment of those persons as school mental health professionals by providing student loan repayment assistance for service as a mental health provider in Texas public schools.

Repayment assistance would be available to a person who was a mental health professional who for at least one year had been employed full-time at, and provided mental health services to students enrolled in, a Texas public school and who was currently employed and providing such health services.

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board would be required to distribute a copy of the rules permitting mental health professionals to obtain repayment assistance to each higher education institution that offered an educational program that prepared students for a school mental health profession.

The bill also would make conforming changes to reflect the new added purpose of the program.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2023, and would apply only to a person who first established eligibility for loan repayment assistance on the basis of an application submitted on or after the effective date.

NOTES:

According to the Legislative Budget Board, the fiscal implications of HB 3140 could not be determined due to the unavailability of data related to the number of school mental health professionals that would participate in the Teach for Texas Loan Repayment Assistance Program.