

SUBJECT: Establishing innovation grant programs related to behavioral health

COMMITTEE: Higher Education — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 9 ayes — Kuempel, Paul, Bucy, Burns, Clardy, Cole, M. González, Howard, Lalani

0 nays

2 absent — Burrows, Raney

WITNESSES: For — (*Registered, but did not testify:* Stacy Wilson, Children’s Hospital Association of Texas; Eric Woomer, Federation of Texas Psychiatry; Lindsay Lanagan, Legacy Community Health; Christine Yanas, Methodist Healthcare Ministries; Hannah Gill, NAMI Texas; Sydney Carter, Network of Behavioral Health Providers; Timothy Ottinger, St. Luke’s Health; Maureen Milligan, Teaching Hospitals of Texas; Leela Rice, Texas Council of Community Centers; Reed Clay, Texas Health Resources; Caitlin Flanders, Texas Medical Association; Jill Sutton, Texas Osteopathic Medical Association; Ashley Ford, The Arc of Texas; Jennifer Allmon, The Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops; Ashley Harris, United Ways of Texas)

Against — None

On — Jair Soares, UTHealth Houston (*Registered, but did not testify:* Elizabeth Mayer, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board)

DIGEST: HB 400 would require the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) to establish the psychiatric specialty innovation grant program under which the board would award incentive payments to medical schools that administer residency training programs designed to increase the number of physicians who specialize in pediatric or adult psychiatric care.

THECB also would establish the behavioral health innovation grant

program under which it would award incentive payments to institutions of higher education that administer innovative recruitment, training, and retention programs designed to increase the number of mental health professionals.

In addition to other money appropriated by the Legislature, THECB could seek and apply for any available federal funds and solicit and accept gifts, grants, and donations for the purpose of pediatric or adult psychiatric care. In consultation with each medical school in the state and the Texas Behavioral Health Executive Council, THECB would adopt rules to administer the program, including rules on certain administrative provisions and methods for tracking the effectiveness of grants.

A grant awarded under the programs could not exceed \$1 million. Medical schools and institutions of higher education that received a grant would be required to submit an annual report on the amounts and purposes for which the funds were spent. Up to 5 percent of any general revenue for the program could be used for administration costs.

For the psychiatric specialty innovation grant program, THECB would be required to award 60 percent of the amount available in each program year to medical schools with innovative residency programs that trained physicians to specialize in pediatric psychiatric care and 40 percent of the amount available to medical schools with innovate residency programs that trained physicians to specialize in adult psychiatric care. THECB would be required to give priority to grants to medical schools with innovative residency programs based in rural or underserved areas.

For the behavioral health innovation grant program, THECB would be required to give priority to applicants that proposed to enhance or leverage existing degree programs, establish or maintain a rural or underserved area, or meet certain other requirements.

As soon as practicable after the effective date, THECB would be required to adopt rules for the implementation and administration of the innovation grant programs. The programs would have to be established by September

1, 2024.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2023.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

HB 400 would help address the mental and behavioral health workforce shortage by creating innovation grant programs for medical schools and higher education institutions focused on the psychiatric specialty and behavioral health fields. The current workforce shortage limits access to needed care for Texans, and innovative grants could help recruit, train, and produce behavioral health and psychiatric specialists to alleviate the shortage. The bill would provide support for both adult and pediatric psychiatry programs and help medical students receive needed clinical experience.

**CRITICS
SAY:**

HB 400 should set a lifetime limit on gifts, grants, and donations to ensure that no donors had too much influence on the program. The bill also should include more specific definition and evaluation criteria for what programs qualified as “innovative.”

NOTES:

According to the Legislative Budget Board, the fiscal implications of HB 400 could not be determined due to the unavailability of data related to the number of institutions that would be eligible for the award and what amounts would be awarded.