

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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H.B. 3544
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Education
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Engrossed

DIGEST

In 1998, the Texas Department of Health (TDH) designated 87 areas of Texas as having a dental health professional shortage. Representatives from Texas' dental schools, TDH, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, and the Texas Dental Association have made efforts to recruit dentists in some of these underserved areas. This bill would create a student loan repayment assistance program to provide an incentive for dentists to practice in an underserved area.

PURPOSE

As proposed, H.B. 3544 establishes procedures for the provision of student loan repayment assistance for certain dentists.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority is granted to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in SECTION 1 (Sections 61.902(b) and 61.908(a), Education Code) of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Chapter 61, Education Code, by adding Subchapter T, as follows:

SUBCHAPTER T. REPAYMENT OF CERTAIN DENTAL EDUCATION LOANS

Sec. 61.901. **REPAYMENT AUTHORIZED.** Authorizes the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (board) to provide assistance in the repayment of student loans for dentists who apply and qualify for the assistance, using funds appropriated for that purpose and in accordance with this subchapter and rules of the board.

Sec. 61.902. **ELIGIBILITY.** Requires a dentist to apply to the board and have completed at least one year of dental practice in an area that is underserved with respect to dental care, to be eligible to receive repayment assistance. Authorizes the board, by rule, to provide for repayment assistance on a pro rata basis for dentists in part-time practice.

Sec. 61.903. **LIMITATION.** Authorizes a dentist to receive repayment assistance grants for each of not more than five years.

Sec. 61.904. **ELIGIBLE LOANS.** Authorizes the board to provide repayment assistance for the repayment of any student loan for education at institutions of higher education, received by a dentist through any lender. Authorizes the board to withhold repayment assistance for a student loan that is in default at the time of the dentist's application.

Sec. 61.905. **REPAYMENT.** Requires the board to deliver any repayment made under this subchapter in a lump sum payable to the lender and the dentist, in accordance with any applicable federal law. Authorizes a payment made under this subchapter to be applied to any amount due in connection with the loan.

Sec. 61.906. **ADVISORY COMMITTEES.** Authorizes the board to appoint committees from outside the board's membership to assist the board in performing its duties and request the assistance of the Oral Health Services Advisory Committee (committee).

Sec. 61.907. ACCEPTANCE OF FUNDS. Authorizes the board to accept gifts, grants, and donations for the purposes of this subchapter.

Sec. 61.908. RULES. Requires the board to adopt rules necessary for the administration of this subchapter. Authorizes the board to consult with the committee to assist the board in establishing priorities among eligible dentists for repayment assistance, taking certain criteria into consideration. Requires the board to distribute a copy of all rules adopted under this section and other pertinent information, to each dental school in this state and to appropriate state agencies and professional associations.

Sec. 61.909. TOTAL AMOUNT OF REPAYMENT ASSISTANCE. Prohibits the total amount of repayment assistance distributed by the board under this subchapter from exceeding the total amount of gifts and grants accepted by the board for repayment assistance, dental school tuition set aside under Section 61.910, legislative appropriations for repayment assistance, and other funds available to the board for purposes of this subchapter.

Sec. 61.910. DENTAL SCHOOL TUITION SET ASIDE FOR CERTAIN LOAN REPAYMENTS. Requires the governing board of each dental school of an institution of higher education to set aside two percent of tuition charges for resident students enrolled in a degree program for training dentists. Requires the amount of the set aside to be transferred to the comptroller of public accounts to be maintained in the state treasury. Provides that Section 403.095(b), Government Code, does not apply to the amount set aside by this section.

SECTION 2. Effective date: September 1, 1999.

SECTION 3. Emergency clause.