

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

S.B. 1595
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Education
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DIGEST AND PURPOSE

In 1999, the 76th Legislature established the Teach for Texas Conditional Grant (TTCG) within the TEXAS Grant program as an incentive for Texas students to pursue teaching as a profession. After the initial awards were made, the Senate Education Committee and the TEXAS Grant Oversight Committee identified several needed refinements in the program. As proposed, S.B. 1595 addresses the issues identified during the interim by, among other things, moving TTCG out of the TEXAS Grant program and into a newly created subchapter.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in SECTION 1 (Section 56.353, Education Code) of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Redesignates Section 56.309, Education Code, as Chapter 56O, Education Code, and amends it as follows:

SUBCHAPTER O. TEACH FOR TEXAS FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Sec. 56.351. DEFINITIONS. Defines “coordinating board” and “eligible institution.”

Sec. 56.352. New heading: PURPOSE OF PROGRAM. Changes language to provide that the purpose of this subchapter, rather than the Teach for Texas grant program, is to attract to the teaching profession persons who have expressed interest in teaching and to support the certification of those persons as classroom teachers by providing grants on the condition that the recipient serve as a classroom teacher in the public schools of this state for a specified period.

Sec. 56.353. ELIGIBILITY FOR GRANT; TEACHING AGREEMENT. (a) Deletes language relating to a Teach for Texas grant only being available to a person who receives a TEXAS grant under Section 56.304 or 56.305 or applies for a Teach for Texas tuition grant. Adds language to provide that in order to be eligible for a Teach for Texas grant a person is required to apply for a grant and be seeking educator certification; be enrolled in an eligible institution of higher education in this state as a junior or senior in a baccalaureate degree program or in the person’s first academic year in an educator certification program after receiving a baccalaureate degree; making satisfactory progress toward completion of the person’s educator certification program; and satisfy certain other criteria.

(b) Requires the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (board), in awarding Teach for Texas grants, to give priority to applicants whose expected family contribution and demonstrated financial need, as determined by the financial aid office of the institution the applicant attends, does not exceed the applicant’s cost of attendance.

(c) Requires the board, if the money available for grants in a period for which grants are awarded exceeds the amount needed to provide grants to all eligible applicants described by Subsection (b), to award grants from the remaining money to additional eligible applicants. Requires the board to prescribe by rule the eligibility requirements for these applicants based on the factors that the board considers appropriate to further the purposes of this subchapter.

(d) Requires the board, if the money available for grants in a period for which grants are awarded is insufficient to provide grants to all eligible applicants described by Subsection (b), to award grants among those applicants according to financial need.

(e) Prohibits a person from receiving Teach for Texas tuition grants for more than three academic years or the equivalent.

(f) Provides that a person is not eligible to receive a Teach for Texas grant if the person has been convicted of a felony or an offense under Chapter 481 (Texas Controlled Substances Act), Health and Safety Code, or under the law of another jurisdiction involving a controlled substance, as defined by Chapter 481, Health and Safety Code, unless the person has met the other applicable eligibility requirements under this subchapter and has met certain other requirements.

(g) Provides that for the purpose of this section, a person makes satisfactory academic progress toward completion of an educator certification program if the person completes at least 75 percent of the semester credit hours attempted in the student's most recent academic year, and earns an overall grade point average of at least 2.5 on a four-point scale or the equivalent on coursework previously attempted at institutions of higher education.

Sec. 56.354. AMOUNT OF GRANT; TOTAL AMOUNT OF GRANTS. (a) Prohibits the total amount of Teach for Texas grants that a person may receive from exceeding the total amount of TEXAS grants that a person may receive under Subchapter M for the two academic years beginning with the first academic year in which the person receives a Teach for Texas grant. Deletes language relating to other requirements for a person to receive a Teach for Texas grant.

(b) Sets forth provisions for determining the amount of a Teach for Texas grant for a semester or term.

Sec. 56.355. ELIGIBILITY FOR TEXAS GRANT NOT AFFECTED. Authorizes a person to receive both a TEXAS grant under Subchapter M and a Teach for Texas grant under this subchapter for the same semester or term.

Sec. 56.356. SATISFYING TEACHING OBLIGATION; REPAYMENT. (a) Requires a person who receives one or more Teach for Texas grants to begin fulfilling the teaching obligation of the person's grants not later than the 18th month after the person completes the educator certification for which the person received the grants, unless the board grants the person additional time to begin fulfilling the teaching obligation. Deletes language relating to the person completing the degree program and any related courses required for teacher certification.

(d) Redesignated from existing Subsection (g). Adds language relating to a person repaying the outstanding amount, rather than amount, of the grant plus applicable interest and reasonable collection costs if the person does not satisfy the applicable conditions.

(f) Redesignated from existing Subsection (i). Makes conforming changes.

Sec. 56.357. **TEACH FOR TEXAS ALTERNATIVE CERTIFICATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.** (a) Requires the board to establish a program under which the board awards grants to assist persons seeking educator certification through alternative educator certification programs as provided by this section.

(b) Sets forth provisions for eligibility for a grant under this program.

(c) Requires the board to consider certain information in selecting applicants to receive grants under the program.

(d) Provides that the amount of a grant under the program is the amount determined by the board two times the total amount of TEXAS grants that a person may receive under Subchapter M for the two academic years beginning with the academic year in which the person receives the grant under this section.

(e) Requires the person to begin fulfilling the person's teaching obligation not later than the 18th month after the person completes the alternative educator certification program unless the board for good cause grants the person additional time to begin fulfilling the teaching obligation. Requires the person to complete the teaching obligation not later than the sixth year after the date the person begins to fulfill the obligation. Requires the board to grant a person additional time to complete the obligation for good cause.

(f) Requires the board to cancel a person's teaching obligation if the board determines that the person has become permanently disabled so that the person is not able to teach or has died.

(g) Requires the board to require a person who receives a grant to sign a promissory note acknowledging the conditional nature of the grant and promising to repay the amount of the grant plus applicable interest and reasonable collection costs if the person does not satisfy the applicable conditions of the grant. Requires the board to determine the terms of the promissory note.

(h) Requires the amount required to be repaid by a person who fails to complete the teaching obligation of the person's grant to be determined in proportion to the proportion of the teaching obligation that the person has not satisfied.

(i) Sets forth provisions determining when a person has failed to satisfy the conditions of the grant.

Sec. 56.358. **FUNDING; ALLOCATION OF FUNDING.** (a) Authorizes the board to solicit and accept gifts and grants from any public or private source for the purposes of this subchapter.

(b) Authorizes the legislature to appropriate money for the purposes of this subchapter.

SECTION 2. Amends the heading to Chapter 56M, Education Code, as added by Chapter 1590, Acts of the 76th Legislature, Regular Session, 1999, to read as follows:

SUBCHAPTER M. TOWARD EXCELLENCE, ACCESS, & SUCCESS (TEXAS) GRANT PROGRAM

SECTION 3. Amends Section 56.308(b), to delete reference to the TEXAS grant Teach for Texas grant programs being established under this subchapter.

SECTION 4. Amends Section 56.311, Education Code, to make conforming changes.

SECTION 5. Amends Section 11.252(a), Education Code, to make a conforming change.

SECTION 6. Amends Chapter 61M, Education Code, by amending Section 61.702 and adding Section 61.7021, as follows:

Sec. 61.702. New heading: **ELIGIBILITY FOR CLASSROOM TEACHER REPAYMENT ASSISTANCE.** (a) Requires a person, to be eligible to receive repayment assistance for classroom teachers, to apply with the board and meet certain requirements.

(b) Provides that a person is not eligible for repayment assistance for classroom teachers under this subsection if the person has received a Teach for Texas grant or other financial assistance under Chapter 56O, or under former Section 56.309.

(c) Requires the board to give priority in granting repayment assistance for classroom teachers to a person who received repayment assistance for the preceding school year. Provides that the priority terminates if the person does not apply for or is not eligible for that assistance. Authorizes the board, in extraordinary circumstances, to allow a person to maintain the priority after one or more years in which the person is unable to teach as a classroom teacher.

Sec. 61.7021. **ELIGIBILITY FOR BORDER INSTITUTION FACULTY REPAYMENT ASSISTANCE.** Requires that a person apply to the board and meet certain requirements in order to be eligible to receive repayment assistance for border institution faculty.

SECTION 7. Amends Section 61.705, Education Code, by amending Subsection (c) and adding Subsections (d) and (e), as follows:

(c) Provides that the minimum amount of repayment assistance that may be awarded in one year to a person who qualifies for the assistance under Section 61.702 is the lesser of \$1,000 or the amount of principal and accrued interest that is due on eligible loans in that year.

(d) Prohibits a person from receiving repayment assistance for classroom teachers under this subchapter in a total amount that exceeds \$5,000 and from receiving that repayment assistance for more than five years.

(e) Provides that the minimum amount of repayment assistance that may be awarded in one year to a person who qualifies for the assistance under Section 61.7021 is 50 percent of the amount of principal and accrued interest that is due on eligible loans that year.

SECTION 8. Amends Section 61.708(a), Education Code, to delete language relating the board adopting a rule that sets a minimum or maximum amount of repayment assistance that may be received in one year by a person described by Section 61.702(1), and to make a conforming change.

SECTION 9. (a) Requires the board to implement the changes made by this Act to the Teach for Texas grant program and to the classroom teacher loan repayment assistance program under Chapter 61M, Education Code, as soon as practicable after the effective date of this Act, but not later than the 2002-2003 academic year.

(b) Requires the board to adopt initial rules for awarding grants and to award grants under the Teach for Texas alternative certification assistance program established under Section 56.357, Education Code, as added by this Act, as soon as practicable.

SECTION 10. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2001.