

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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S.B. 441
By: Birdwell
Economic Development
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As Filed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

S.B. 441 creates the Texas Fast Start Program, a career and technical education program designed to help students earn career certifications and enter the workforce quickly. The bill empowers the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) to work with public junior colleges and public technical institutes to identify, develop, and support methods to maximize academic or workforce education credit to expedite the entry of postsecondary students into the workforce. Examples of actions TWC may take include granting awards to public junior colleges and public technical institutes for the expansion of existing fast start programs, developing new fast developing start programs, and creating any other activities related to the aforementioned purposes. TWC is also empowered to create incentives for public junior colleges and public technical institutes to expand existing fast start programs. Grants must be used only to support courses or programs that prepare students for career employment in fields or occupations identified as high-demand by local employers, finance the costs of the program, finance the development or expansion of the program, or offer new or expanded dual credit jointly with a public high school.

As proposed, S.B. 441 amends current law relating to the establishment of the Texas Fast Start Program to promote rapid delivery of workforce education and development.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Texas Workforce Commission in SECTION 1 (Section 302.0032, Labor Code) of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Subchapter A, Chapter 302, Labor Code, by adding Section 302.0032, as follows:

Sec. 302.0032. TEXAS FAST START PROGRAM. (a) Defines "fast start program," "public junior college," and "public technical institute" in this section.

(b) Requires the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) to establish and administer the Texas Fast Start Program to identify, develop, and support methods to maximize academic or workforce education credit from public junior colleges and public technical institutes to expedite the entry of postsecondary students into the workforce.

(c) Requires TWC to work collaboratively with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, public junior colleges, and public technical institutes to accomplish the purposes of this section.

(d) Requires TWC, through the collaboration, to develop new competency-based, rapid-deployment education delivery models for use by a public junior college or public technical institute in developing or expanding a fast start program as described by this section.

(e) Requires a fast start program under this section to:

- (1) focus on the current and future needs of employers in this state;
- (2) enable students to obtain certifications at an accelerated pace in high-demand fields or occupations, as identified by local employers;
- (3) incorporate competency-based learning techniques;
- (4) feature a variety of access channels that are uniquely designed to maximize job preparedness for identified groups such as veterans, high school graduates, and current workforce members seeking retraining; and
- (5) be designed for rapid deployment statewide.

(f) Provides that TWC, through the collaboration:

(1) is authorized to award grants to public junior colleges and public technical institutes for:

- (A) the expansion of existing fast start programs;
- (B) the development of new fast start programs; and
- (C) any other activities related to the purposes of this section; and

(2) is required to create a variety of incentives that encourage public junior colleges and public technical institutes to expand any existing fast start programs.

(g) Authorizes a grant received under this section to be used only to:

- (1) support a course or program that prepares students for career employment in fields or occupations that are identified as high-demand by local employers;
- (2) finance the initial costs of developing a fast start program, including the costs of constructing or renovating facilities, purchasing equipment, and other associated expenses;
- (3) finance the development or expansion of a fast start program leading to a license, certificate, or postsecondary degree; and
- (4) offer a new or expanded dual credit fast start program jointly with a public high school.

(h) Requires TWC to administer the program using money appropriated to TWC, money received from federal or other sources, or money from holding accounts that are authorized to be used by TWC for the purpose of skills development.

(i) Authorizes TWC to adopt rules as necessary for the administration of this section.

SECTION 2. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2013.