

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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C.S.S.B. 1758
By: Creighton
Higher Education
4/30/2019
Committee Report (Substituted)

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Background

- The State of Texas currently provides specialized financial assistance, often through the form of loan repayments, to students who have graduated from degree programs in targeted employment fields where we desire to increase graduation rates to meet employment needs.
- Although Western Governors University-Texas graduates thousands of students a year in many of these same fields, was created by an act of the State, and is recognized for its high outcomes and low costs, these financial aid programs are not accessible to WGU-Texas students.
- Current statutes typically require students to attend or have attended schools accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges (SACS) in order to be eligible for financial assistance. WGU-Texas, however, is accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU), the SACS equivalent in the Northwest U.S., because their brick and mortar administration is located in Utah.

Bill Proposal

- The committee substitute specifically would allow WGU-Texas and its students to participate in the following:
 - Texas hospital-based nursing education grant program;
 - professional nursing shortage reduction program;
 - Teach for Texas loan repayment assistance program;
 - loan repayment program for mental health professionals;
 - nursing faculty loan repayment assistance program; and
 - math and science scholars loan repayment program.
- The substitute differs from the filed bill by removing several programs that are no longer active.
- The substitute postpones eligibility for the professional nursing reduction program until June 1, 2021.

C.S.S.B. 1758 amends current law relating to the application of certain occupation-related postsecondary educational financial aid and student loan repayment programs.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) in SECTION 8 of this bill.

Rulemaking authority previously granted to THECB is modified in SECTION 4 (Section 61.96232, Education Code) of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Section 61.605(a), Education Code, as follows:

(a) Authorizes the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) to provide repayment assistance under this subchapter (Repayment of Certain Mental Health Professional Education Loans) for the repayment of any student loan, including a loan for undergraduate education, received by an eligible person through any lender for education at:

(1)–(3) creates these subdivisions from existing text and makes nonsubstantive changes; or

(4) a nonprofit, tax-exempt, regionally accredited college or university operating in accordance with a memorandum of understanding with this state under an executive order issued by the governor.

SECTION 2. Amends Section 61.608(b), Education Code, to require THECB to distribute copies of the rules adopted under this section and other pertinent information relating to this subchapter to certain entities, including each college or university described by Section 61.605(a)(4).

SECTION 3. Amends Section 61.9621, Education Code, as follows:

Sec. 61.9621. DEFINITION. Defines "professional nursing program" to mean an educational program preparing students for initial licensure as registered nurses offered by:

(1) creates this subdivision from existing text and makes nonsubstantive changes; and

(2) a nonprofit, tax-exempt, regionally accredited college or university operating in accordance with a memorandum of understanding with this state under an executive order issued by the governor, rather than a public or private institution of higher education for preparing students for initial licensure as registered nurses.

SECTION 4. Amends Section 61.96232(a), Education Code, as follows:

(a) Requires THECB by rule to establish a process under which a public or private institution of higher education or an institution described by Section 61.9621(2) that offers a professional nursing program may apply for a grant under this subchapter (Professional Nursing Shortage Reduction Program) and the commissioner of higher education (commissioner), contingent on appropriations of money for the grants, selects one or more applicants to receive a grant based on criteria established by THECB rule.

SECTION 5. Amends Section 61.9751(2), Education Code, as follows:

(2) Defines "nursing education program" to mean:

(A) creates this paragraph from existing text and makes nonsubstantive changes; and

(B) a comparable nursing program offered by a nonprofit, tax-exempt, regionally accredited college or university operating in accordance with a memorandum of understanding with this state under an executive order issued by the governor.

SECTION 6. Amends Section 61.9824(a), Education Code, as follows:

(a) Authorizes THECB to provide repayment assistance for the repayment of any student loan received by an eligible person through any lender that is for education, including undergraduate education at:

(1) a public or private institution of higher education; or

(2) a nonprofit, tax-exempt, regionally accredited college or university operating in accordance with a memorandum of understanding with this state under an executive order issued by the governor.

Deletes existing text authorizing THECB to provide repayment assistance for the repayment of any student loan for education at any public or private institution of higher education, including a loan for undergraduate education received by an eligible person through any lender.

SECTION 7. Amends Section 61.9835(a), Education Code, as follows:

(a) Authorizes THECB to provide repayment assistance under this subchapter (Math and Science Scholars Loan Repayment Program) for the repayment of any student loan received by an eligible person through an eligible lender that is for education at, rather than authorizing THECB to provide repayment assistance under this subchapter for the repayment of any student loan that is for education at:

(1) creates this subdivision from existing text and makes nonsubstantive changes; or

(2) a nonprofit, tax-exempt, regionally accredited college or university operating in accordance with a memorandum of understanding with this state under an executive order issued by the governor, rather than received by an eligible person through an eligible lender.

SECTION 8. Requires THECB, as soon as practicable after the effective of this Act, to adopt any rules necessary to administer the changes in law made by this Act.

SECTION 9. Prohibits THECB from awarding grants under the professional nursing shortage reduction program as provided by the changes in law made by this Act to Sections 61.9621 and 61.96232, Education Code, before June 1, 2021.

SECTION 10. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2019.