

By: Parker

S.B. No. 2139

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to the creation of the Opportunity High School Diploma pilot program.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1. Chapter 29, Education Code, is amended by adding Subchapter K-1 to read as follows:

SUBCHAPTER K-1. OPPORTUNITY HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA PILOT PROGRAM

Sec. 29.405. PURPOSE. It is the intent of the legislature to study alternative means by which an adult student who enrolls in a workforce education program at a public junior college and who has previously dropped out of secondary education may earn a high school diploma from a public junior college through a competency-based educational program that enables the student to demonstrate knowledge substantially equivalent to what is required for a Foundation High School Diploma. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board shall consult with the Texas Education Agency and Texas Workforce Commission during the development and implementation of this pilot program.

Sec. 29.406. DEFINITIONS. In this subchapter:

(1) "Opportunity High School Diploma" means a diploma awarded by a public junior college approved by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board under this subchapter.

(2) "Board" means the Texas Higher Education Coordinating

1 Board.

2 (3) "Eligible student" means any student age 18 or older who
3 has been, or would have been, recorded as a dropout in the Texas
4 public education system or has not otherwise earned a GED or diploma
5 from a Texas public school or through any other secondary
6 education.

7 (4) "Participating institution" means a public junior
8 college authorized by the board, either alone or as part of a
9 consortium of institutions, to offer a program under this
10 subchapter.

11 (5) "Substantially equivalent" means the provision by a
12 participating institution of higher education of any combination of
13 instruction, curriculum, achievement, internship opportunities, or
14 other means by which the board determines that an educational
15 program under this subchapter may appropriately certify that a
16 student has attained levels of knowledge sufficient to adequately
17 prepare a student for postsecondary education or additional
18 workforce education.

19 Sec. 29.407. OPPORTUNITY HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA. (a) The
20 board may approve not more than five public junior colleges to
21 participate as lead institutions for a pilot program to offer an
22 alternative competency-based high school diploma program for adult
23 learners.

24 (b) The board shall review and approve a proposed program
25 requested by a public junior college, if the board determines that
26 the public junior college's proposed program will provide
27 instruction and assessments appropriate to certify that a student

1 can demonstrate levels of knowledge sufficient to adequately
2 prepare a student for postsecondary education or additional
3 workforce education.

4 (c) Each approved public junior college program shall
5 concurrently enroll an eligible student in a workforce education
6 program and the Opportunity High School Diploma program to allow
7 the student to earn a high school diploma while completing a
8 postsecondary certificate or degree.

9 (d) Each approved public junior college program shall
10 administer assessments as prescribed by Board rule prior to award
11 of an Opportunity High School Diploma.

12 (e) A diploma under this section shall be considered
13 equivalent to a Foundation High School Diploma.

14 Sec. 29.408. APPROVAL. (a) The board may approve not more
15 than five public junior college programs to offer the Opportunity
16 High School Diploma under this subchapter.

17 (b) A public junior college that submits a proposed program
18 under this subchapter may enter into an agreement with one or more
19 public junior colleges, general academic teaching institutions,
20 public school districts, or nonprofit organizations to offer a
21 program.

22 (c) Upon board approval, a public junior college or colleges
23 may offer an approved program at any campus of the applicant or
24 partnering institution.

25 Sec. 29.409. FUNDING. (a) The Texas Workforce Commission
26 and the board shall work jointly to identify funding mechanisms,
27 including grants, interagency contracts, financial aid, or

1 subsidies available to public junior colleges and students to
2 encourage and facilitate adult dropouts in earning the Opportunity
3 High School Diploma.

4 (b) A public junior college that offers an Opportunity High
5 School Diploma under this subchapter shall be entitled to funding
6 in the community college finance system, as determined by the
7 board.

8 Sec. 29.410. RULE MAKING AND IMPLEMENTATION. (a) The board
9 shall adopt rules to implement this subchapter as necessary.

10 (b) The board may coordinate with the Texas Education Agency
11 as necessary to determine whether a proposed program offering an
12 Opportunity High School Diploma is sufficient to adequately prepare
13 a student for postsecondary education or additional workforce
14 education.

15 SECTION 2. Chapter 130, Education Code, is amended by
16 adding Section 130.0082 to read as follows:

17 Sec. 130.0082. PILOT PROGRAM FOR HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMAS FOR
18 RECOVERED DROPOUTS IN PUBLIC JUNIOR COLLEGES. A public junior
19 college may apply to the board to offer an Opportunity High School
20 Diploma program in accordance with subchapter K-1, Chapter 29,
21 Texas Education Code.

22 SECTION 3. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives
23 a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as
24 provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this
25 Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this
26 Act takes effect September 1, 2023.