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S.B. No. 1488

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to an undergraduate education scholarship program for students who agree to teach in public schools in this state that have teacher shortages.

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

SECTION 1. Chapter 61, Education Code, is amended by adding Subchapter FF to read as follows:

SUBCHAPTER FF. UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM FOR
TEACHERS AT PUBLIC SCHOOLS WITH TEACHER SHORTAGES

Sec. 61.9831. SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM; AMOUNT OF SCHOLARSHIP.

(a) In accordance with this subchapter and board rules, the board shall establish and administer a program to award scholarships to undergraduate students who:

(1) are enrolled in educator preparation programs provided by public or private institutions of higher education in this state; and

(2) agree to teach for a specified period in the public schools in this state that are determined by the Texas Education Agency to have shortages of teachers.

(b) The amount of a scholarship under this subchapter for an academic year is equal to the lesser of:

(1) the total amount of tuition that the public or private institution of higher education in which the scholarship recipient is enrolled charges the recipient for that academic year

for semester credit hours for which the recipient may use the scholarship to pay tuition as provided by Subsection (c); or

(2) \$5,000.

(c) A student may use a scholarship under this subchapter only to pay tuition for a semester credit hour that is required for completion of the educator preparation program in which the student is enrolled.

(d) For purposes of this subchapter, not later than April 1 of each school year, the Texas Education Agency shall determine which public schools in this state are anticipated to have shortages of teachers during the following school year and shall provide that information to the board and to each educator preparation program in this state accredited by the State Board for Educator Certification.

Sec. 61.9832. ELIGIBILITY; LIMITATION ON NUMBER OF SCHOLARSHIPS. (a) To be eligible to receive a scholarship under this subchapter, a person must:

(1) have graduated from a high school in this state with an overall grade point average:

(A) of at least 3.0 on a four-point scale or the equivalent; and

(B) in the top 25 percent of the student's graduating class;

(2) have earned a score of at least:

(A) 1100 out of 1600 or the equivalent on the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT), disregarding the writing section; or

1 (B) 24 out of 36 or the equivalent on the ACT
2 assessment;

3 (3) be enrolled in an educator preparation program
4 accredited by the State Board for Educator Certification that is
5 provided by a public or private institution of higher education in
6 this state; and

7 (4) enter into an agreement with the board as provided
8 by Section 61.9833.

9 (b) Not more than 4,000 scholarships may be awarded under
10 this subchapter for an academic year.

11 (b-1) This subsection expires September 1, 2011.
12 Notwithstanding Subsection (b), not more than the following number
13 of scholarships may be awarded under this subchapter for the
14 specified academic year:

15 (1) for the 2008-2009 academic year, not more than
16 1,000 scholarships may be awarded;

17 (2) for the 2009-2010 academic year, not more than
18 2,000 scholarships may be awarded; and

19 (3) for the 2010-2011 academic year, not more than
20 3,000 scholarships may be awarded.

21 (c) If in any year the amount of money available for
22 scholarships under this subchapter is insufficient to award a
23 scholarship to each eligible applicant or if there are more
24 eligible applicants than the number of scholarships authorized by
25 this section, the board shall establish criteria to determine which
26 eligible applicants will be granted scholarships as the board
27 determines appropriate to further the purposes of this subchapter,

1 including criteria that:

2 (1) are related to the financial need of an applicant;
3 and

4 (2) serve to ensure geographic and ethnic diversity
5 among scholarship recipients.

6 Sec. 61.9833. AGREEMENT REQUIREMENTS. (a) To qualify for a
7 scholarship under this subchapter, a person must enter into a
8 written agreement with the board as provided by this section. The
9 agreement must:

10 (1) specify the conditions the person must satisfy to
11 receive the scholarship award;

12 (2) require the person to earn a baccalaureate degree
13 through completion of an educator preparation program accredited by
14 the State Board for Educator Certification that is provided by a
15 public or private institution of higher education in this state;

16 (3) require the person to obtain, within the period
17 prescribed by board rule, appropriate certification under
18 Subchapter B, Chapter 21, to teach in a public school in this state;

19 (4) require the person to accept, for the first school
20 year that begins after the date the person obtains the appropriate
21 certification, an offer of full-time employment to teach in a
22 public school in this state selected by the person from among
23 schools anticipated by the Texas Education Agency to have shortages
24 of teachers for that first school year for which the person is
25 accepting employment;

26 (5) require the person to complete eight years of
27 full-time employment teaching as follows:

1 (A) beginning with the school year described by
2 Subdivision (4), four consecutive school years of employment
3 teaching in one or more public schools in this state selected by the
4 person from among schools anticipated by the Texas Education Agency
5 to have shortages of teachers for the person's applicable year of
6 employment by the school; and

7 (B) beginning with the school year immediately
8 following the last of the four consecutive school years described
9 by Paragraph (A), four additional consecutive school years teaching
10 in any public school in this state;

11 (6) provide that any scholarship award the person
12 receives under this subchapter constitutes an interest-free loan
13 until the person:

14 (A) subject to Section 61.9835, satisfies the
15 requirements of Subdivision (5) and any other applicable conditions
16 of the agreement; or

17 (B) is excused from the repayment obligation in
18 accordance with law; and

19 (7) require the person to sign a promissory note
20 acknowledging the conditional nature of the scholarship award
21 received and promising to repay any unforgiven amount of that award
22 and reasonable collection costs if the person does not satisfy the
23 applicable conditions and is not excused from the repayment
24 obligation in accordance with law.

25 (b) For purposes of Subsection (a)(5)(A), if a person is
26 employed as a teacher in a public school anticipated to have a
27 shortage of teachers in the first year of employment, each

1 subsequent year of continuous employment as a teacher in that
2 school is considered to be employment in a school anticipated to
3 have a shortage of teachers in that year, regardless of whether the
4 Texas Education Agency anticipated that the school would have a
5 shortage of teachers in that year.

6 (c) The board shall determine the terms of the promissory
7 note required by Subsection (a)(7). To the extent practicable, the
8 terms must be the same as those applicable to state or federally
9 guaranteed student loans made at the same time.

10 Sec. 61.9834. EXCEPTIONS TO TEACHING AND REPAYMENT
11 OBLIGATIONS. (a) A person is not considered to be in violation of
12 the teaching obligation in the agreement described by Section
13 61.9833 during any period in which the person:

14 (1) is pursuing a full-time course of study related to
15 the field of teaching offered by a public or private institution of
16 higher education in this state and approved by the State Board for
17 Educator Certification;

18 (2) is serving on active duty as a member of the armed
19 forces of the United States, including as a member of a reserve
20 force or National Guard called to active duty;

21 (3) is temporarily totally disabled for a period not
22 to exceed 36 months as established by the affidavit of a qualified
23 physician;

24 (4) is unable to secure employment for a period not to
25 exceed 12 months because of care required by a disabled spouse or
26 child;

27 (5) is seeking and unable to find, for a single period

1 not to exceed 12 months, full-time employment teaching in a public
2 school in this state, or if the person is within the period of the
3 agreement described by Section 61.9833(a)(5)(A), full-time
4 employment teaching in a public school in this state anticipated to
5 have a shortage of teachers for the year for which the person is
6 seeking employment; or

7 (6) satisfies the provisions of any other teaching
8 exception adopted by the board.

9 (b) A person is excused from the repayment obligation in a
10 promissory note described by Section 61.9833 if:

11 (1) the person becomes permanently totally disabled as
12 established by the affidavit of a qualified physician; or

13 (2) the board waives repayment in the case of extreme
14 hardship to the person.

15 Sec. 61.9835. FORGIVENESS OF REPAYMENT OBLIGATION. The
16 board shall forgive 25 percent of the total amount required to be
17 repaid according to the promissory note under Section 61.9833 for
18 each complete school year the person teaches in accordance with the
19 agreement under Section 61.9833 after the expiration of the period
20 described by Subsection (a)(5)(A) of that section.

21 Sec. 61.9836. GRANTS, GIFTS, AND DONATIONS. In addition to
22 money appropriated by the legislature, the board may solicit and
23 accept grants, gifts, and donations from any public or private
24 source for the purposes of this subchapter.

25 Sec. 61.9837. RULES. (a) The board shall adopt rules to
26 administer this subchapter, including rules:

27 (1) providing for the manner in which a student may

1 apply for a scholarship; and

2 (2) providing for notification of the scholarship
3 program under this subchapter to students enrolled in educator
4 preparation programs in this state.

5 (b) The board shall distribute to each educator preparation
6 program of a public or private institution of higher education in
7 this state a copy of the rules adopted under this section.

8 SECTION 2. Not later than December 31, 2007, the Texas
9 Higher Education Coordinating Board shall adopt rules for the
10 undergraduate education scholarship program under Subchapter FF,
11 Chapter 61, Education Code, as added by this Act.

12 SECTION 3. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives
13 a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as
14 provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this
15 Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this
16 Act takes effect September 1, 2007.