

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 2154
By: Edwards
Public Health
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Many Texans live in areas, especially rural areas, that are facing primary care physician shortages, which negatively affects the health and economic development of those areas. More than 23 percent of Texans live in a primary care health professional shortage area, the highest percentage of any state. Texas also faces an overall decline in the number of primary care physicians. Medical school debt makes physicians less likely to pursue primary care practices and more likely to choose specialties with higher incomes and more leisure time.

H.B. 2154 provides a mechanism for additional funding for the physician education loan repayment program by adding a \$25 surcharge to medical licenses, which will enable the program to increase awards and support additional physicians who agree to serve in primary care health professional shortage areas.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

ANALYSIS

H.B. 2154 amends the Education Code to create a physician education loan repayment program account as an account in the general revenue fund. The bill authorizes money in the account to be appropriated only for the physician education loan repayment program, and requires interest or other earnings on the balance of the account be credited to the account. The bill exempts the account from provisions of law relating to the use of dedicated revenue. The bill adds to the methods by which the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board is required to deliver repayment of a physician's loan to include delivery made directly to the lender on behalf of the physician in electronic form.

H.B. 2154 amends the Occupations Code to increase from \$400 to \$425 the fee surcharges collected from physicians for the first registration permit and the renewal of a registration permit. The bill increases from \$100 to \$110 the amount from each of those surcharges collected that is required to be deposited to the credit of the foundation school fund. The bill adds the requirement that \$25 from each surcharge fee be deposited to the credit of the physician education loan repayment program account. The bill clarifies that the remainder of the surcharge fees, rather than a specified amount, is required to be deposited to the credit of the general revenue fund.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2009.