

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to a competitive grant program to fund promotion of early literacy programs in certain communities in this state.

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

SECTION 1. Chapter 73, Education Code, is amended by adding Subchapter I to read as follows:

SUBCHAPTER I. COMPETITIVE GRANT PROGRAM TO PROMOTE EARLY LITERACY

Sec. 73.601. DEFINITIONS. In this subchapter:

(1) "Competitive grant program" means the competitive grant program to promote early literacy established under this subchapter.

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

(3) "Health care practitioner" has the meaning assigned by Section 112.001, Occupations Code.

(4) "Health science center" means The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston.

(5) "Literacy program" means a program to promote early literacy.

Sec. 73.602. ESTABLISHMENT OF COMPETITIVE GRANT PROGRAM TO PROMOTE EARLY LITERACY. (a) The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston shall establish a competitive grant program to promote early literacy through which the health science center will award grants for the implementation of literacy programs, or the

1 expansion of existing programs, and for the operation of those
2 programs for a period of not less than two years.

3 (b) The health science center shall award grants under the
4 program to applicants, including applicants operating existing
5 programs, in a manner that ensures that the literacy programs
6 collectively:

7 (1) operate in multiple communities that are
8 geographically distributed throughout this state; and

9 (2) provide program services to approximately 100,000
10 families.

11 Sec. 73.603. LITERACY PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS. (a) A
12 literacy program funded through a grant awarded under this
13 subchapter must:

14 (1) strictly adhere to the program model developed by
15 the Reach Out and Read National Center, including any clinical,
16 programmatic, and data collection requirements of that model;

17 (2) provide matching funds in an amount equal to the
18 amount of the grant funds awarded under this subchapter; and

19 (3) require that health care practitioners volunteer
20 to:

21 (A) in conjunction with performing well-child
22 examinations, encourage parents to read to their children and teach
23 their children to read, and provide books to children;

24 (B) maintain waiting rooms that encourage
25 children to read; and

26 (C) provide services designed to increase the
27 school readiness of children receiving program services.

1 (b) Matching funds under Subsection (a)(2) may include
2 in-kind contributions.

3 Sec. 73.604. APPLICATION. (a) A public or private entity,
4 including a county, municipality, or other political subdivision of
5 this state, may apply for a grant under this subchapter.

6 (b) To apply for a grant, an applicant must submit a written
7 application to the health science center on a form prescribed by the
8 coordinating board in consultation with the Reach Out and Read
9 National Center.

10 (c) The application must:

11 (1) require the applicant to provide data on the
12 number of low-income families residing in the community in which
13 the applicant proposes to operate or expand a literacy program and
14 provide a description of existing services available to those
15 families;

16 (2) describe the ongoing monitoring and evaluation
17 process to which a grant recipient is subject under Section 73.608,
18 including the recipient's obligation to collect and provide
19 information requested by the health science center under Section
20 73.608(d); and

21 (3) require the applicant to provide other relevant
22 information as determined by the health science center.

23 Sec. 73.605. ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS IN AWARDING GRANTS.
24 In addition to the factors described by Sections 73.602(b) and
25 73.603, in determining whether to award a grant to an applicant
26 under this subchapter, the health science center shall consider:

27 (1) the demonstrated need for a literacy program in

1 the community in which the applicant proposes to operate or expand
2 the program, which may be determined by considering:

3 (A) the poverty rate, the crime rate, the number
4 of births to Medicaid recipients, the rate of poor birth outcomes,
5 and the incidence of referrals of elementary school students for
6 remedial instruction or special education services, and of child
7 abuse and neglect, during a prescribed period in the community; and

8 (B) the need to enhance school readiness in the
9 community;

10 (2) the applicant's ability to participate in ongoing
11 monitoring and performance evaluations under Section 73.608,
12 including the applicant's ability to collect and provide
13 information requested by the health science center under Section
14 73.608(d);

15 (3) the applicant's ability to adhere to the literacy
16 program standards adopted under Section 73.606;

17 (4) the applicant's ability to develop broad-based
18 community support for implementing or expanding a literacy program,
19 as applicable; and

20 (5) the applicant's history of developing and
21 sustaining innovative, high-quality programs that meet the needs of
22 families and communities.

23 Sec. 73.606. LITERACY PROGRAM STANDARDS. The coordinating
24 board, with the assistance of the Reach Out and Read National
25 Center, shall adopt standards for the literacy programs funded
26 under this subchapter. The standards must adhere to the Reach Out
27 and Read national program model standards and guidelines that have

1 been tested and replicated in multiple communities.

2 Sec. 73.607. USE OF AWARDED GRANT FUNDS. The grant funds
3 awarded under this subchapter may be used only to cover costs
4 related to implementing or expanding and operating a literacy
5 program, including costs related to:

6 (1) administering the program;

7 (2) training and managing health care practitioners
8 who volunteer to participate in the program; and

9 (3) purchasing discounted books for use in the
10 literacy program.

11 Sec. 73.608. PROGRAM MONITORING AND EVALUATION; ANNUAL
12 COMMITTEE REPORTS. (a) The coordinating board, with the
13 assistance of the Reach Out and Read National Center, shall adopt
14 performance indicators that are designed to measure a grant
15 recipient's performance with respect to the literacy program
16 standards adopted under Section 73.606.

17 (b) The health science center shall:

18 (1) use the performance indicators adopted under
19 Subsection (a) to continuously monitor and formally evaluate on an
20 annual basis the performance of each grant recipient; and

21 (2) prepare and submit an annual report, not later
22 than December 1 of each year, to the Senate Education Committee, or
23 its successor, and the House Public Education Committee, or its
24 successor, regarding the performance of each grant recipient during
25 the preceding state fiscal year with respect to providing literacy
26 program services.

27 (c) The report required under Subsection (b)(2) must

1 include:

2 (1) the number of low-income children receiving
3 literacy program services;

4 (2) the number of health care practitioners who
5 participate in the program and the estimated value of the services
6 provided by those practitioners under the program; and

7 (3) the extent to which each grant recipient adhered
8 to the Reach Out and Read national program model.

9 (d) On request, each grant recipient shall timely collect
10 and provide data and any other information required by the health
11 science center to monitor and evaluate the recipient or to prepare
12 the report required by this section.

13 Sec. 73.609. COMPETITIVE GRANT PROGRAM FUNDING. (a) The
14 health science center shall actively seek and apply for any
15 available federal funds to assist in financing the competitive
16 grant program established under this subchapter.

17 (b) The health science center may use appropriated funds
18 from the state government and may accept gifts, donations, and
19 grants of money from the federal government, local governments,
20 private corporations, or other persons to assist in financing the
21 competitive grant program.

22 SECTION 2. (a) As required by Section 73.609, Education
23 Code, as added by this Act, The University of Texas Health Science
24 Center at Houston shall, as soon as practicable, apply for any
25 available federal funds to assist in financing the competitive
26 grant program under Subchapter I, Chapter 73, Education Code, as
27 added by this Act.

1 (b) Not later than September 1, 2010, the Texas Higher
2 Education Coordinating Board shall adopt necessary rules for, and
3 The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston shall
4 establish and implement, the competitive grant program required by
5 Subchapter I, Chapter 73, Education Code, as added by this Act.

6 (c) Not later than December 1, 2009, The University of Texas
7 Health Science Center at Houston shall submit a report to the Senate
8 Education Committee, or its successor, and the House Public
9 Education Committee, or its successor, regarding the
10 implementation and status of the competitive grant program required
11 by Subchapter I, Chapter 73, Education Code, as added by this Act.

12 (d) Not later than December 1, 2011, The University of Texas
13 Health Science Center at Houston shall submit the initial annual
14 report required by Section 73.608(b)(2), Education Code, as added
15 by this Act.

16 SECTION 3. This Act takes effect September 1, 2009.