

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 343

WHEREAS, The West Texas Area Health Education Center Program has improved access to health care in more than 100 counties through the education and development of the medical workforce; and

WHEREAS, West Texas is one of the most medically underserved regions in the United States; with a predominantly rural population of approximately 2.8 million people, it encompasses a land mass larger than all but four of the states; 64 of its counties have been designated as Health Professions Shortage Areas, and another 15 have a partial county or population Health Professions Shortage Areas designation; the West Texas Area Health Education Center Program, since its founding in 2002, has sought to address the health care provider shortage by increasing the number of future rural health care providers and supporting the retention of professionals currently practicing; and

WHEREAS, Established by the Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center, F. Marie Hall Institute of Rural and Community Health, the West Texas Area Health Education Center Program coordinates the efforts of educational institutions, health care providers, communities, and counties; the program's five centers, located in Abilene, Amarillo, El Paso, Midland, and Plainview, are hosted by local organizations in partnership with the Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center; they belong to a national network of Area Health Education Centers, which was created by Congress in 1971 to enhance access to quality health care, particularly primary and preventive care, by recruiting, training, and retaining health care professionals for communities with critical needs; and

WHEREAS, Because young people raised in underserved settings are more likely than others to consider practicing in such a setting, the West Texas Area Health Education Center Program educates local schoolchildren about careers in the medical field, prepares them for these opportunities and encourages their progress, and conducts targeted outreaches to minorities, now underrepresented in the health care professions; its community-based clinical training programs introduce students in health care professions to underserved communities while enhancing the ability of those communities to recruit new professionals; in addition, the West Texas Area Health Education Center Program provides health needs assessment and planning, coalition building, and strategic prioritization to avert future personnel shortages and to ensure that the current workforce is well trained; and

WHEREAS, Improved access to high-quality health care strengthens communities, and the West Texas Area Health Education Center Program has greatly benefited quality of life and economic development in the region; now, therefore, be it

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RESOLVED, That the Senate of the State of Texas, 82nd Legislature, hereby honor the West Texas Area Health Education Center Program for its outstanding contributions in behalf of the residents of West Texas and extend to all those associated with the program sincere best wishes for continued success in their vital endeavors; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That an official copy of this Resolution be prepared for the West Texas Area Health Education Center Program as an expression of high regard from the Texas Senate.

Duncan

President of the Senate

I hereby certify that the above Resolution was adopted by the Senate on February 22, 2011.

Secretary of the Senate

Member, Texas Senate