

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

S.B. 441
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Economic Development
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Enrolled

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

S.B. 441 creates the Texas Fast Start Program, a career and technical education program designed to help students earn career certifications and enter the workforce quickly. The bill empowers the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC), in partnership with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), to work with public junior colleges and public technical institutes to identify, develop, and support methods to maximize academic or workforce education credit to expedite the entry of postsecondary students into the workforce. Examples of actions TWC and THECB may take include granting awards to public junior colleges and public technical institutes for the expansion of existing fast start programs, developing new fast start programs, and creating any other activities related to the aforementioned purposes. TWC and THECB are also empowered to create incentives for public junior colleges and public technical institutes to expand existing fast start programs. Grants must be used only to support courses or programs that prepare students for career employment in fields or occupations identified as high-demand by local employers, finance the costs of the program, finance the development or expansion of the program, or offer new or expanded dual credit jointly with a public high school.

S.B. 441 amends current law relating to the establishment of the Texas Fast Start Program to promote rapid delivery of workforce education and development.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Texas Workforce Commission and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in SECTION 1 (Section 302.0032, Labor Code) of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Subchapter A, Chapter 302, Labor Code, by adding Section 302.0032, as follows:

Sec. 302.0032. TEXAS FAST START PROGRAM. (a) Defines "fast start program," "public junior college," "public state college," and "public technical institute" in this section.

(b) Requires the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC), in partnership with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), to establish and administer the Texas Fast Start Program to identify and develop methods to support, and to provide support for, competency-based, rapid-deployment education delivery models for use by public junior colleges, public state colleges, and public technical institutes. Requires that the models be designed to assist students in maximizing academic or workforce education program credit from public junior colleges, public state colleges, and public technical institutes to expedite the entry of those students into the workforce.

(c) Requires TWC to work collaboratively with THECB, public junior colleges, public state colleges, and public technical institutes to accomplish the purposes of this section.

(d) Authorizes a public junior college, public state college, or public technical institute to use the competency-based, rapid-deployment education delivery models described by Subsection (b) in developing or expanding a fast start program at the college or institute.

(e) Requires a fast start program offered by a public junior college, public state college, or public technical institute, to:

- (1) focus on the current and future needs of employers in this state;
- (2) enable students to obtain postsecondary certificates and degrees at an accelerated pace in high-demand fields or occupations, as identified by local employers;
- (3) incorporate competency-based learning techniques;
- (4) feature a variety of access channels that are uniquely designed to maximize job preparedness for identified groups such as veterans, high school graduates, and current workforce members seeking retraining; and
- (5) be designed for rapid deployment statewide.

(f) Authorizes TWC, through the collaboration, to award grants to public junior colleges, public state colleges, and public technical institutes for:

- (1) the expansion of existing fast start programs;
- (2) the development of new fast start programs; and
- (3) any other activities related to the purposes of this section.

(g) Authorizes a grant received under this section to be used only to:

- (1) support a course or program that prepares students for career employment in fields or occupations that are identified as high-demand by local employers;
- (2) finance the initial costs of developing a fast start program, including the costs of constructing or renovating facilities, purchasing equipment, and other associated expenses;
- (3) finance the development or expansion of a fast start program leading to a postsecondary certificate or degree; or
- (4) offer a new or expanded dual credit fast start program jointly with a public high school.

(h) Requires TWC and THECB to administer the program using money appropriated to TWC or THECB, money received from federal or other sources, or money from holding accounts that are authorized to be used by TWC for the purpose of skills development.

(i) Authorizes TWC and THECB to adopt rules as necessary for the administration of this section.

SECTION 2. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2013.