

By: Watson

S.B. No. 737

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to student loan repayment assistance for certain child protective services workers.

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

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

SUBCHAPTER II. REPAYMENT OF CERTAIN CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES

CASEWORKER LOANS

Sec. 61.9851. REPAYMENT ASSISTANCE AUTHORIZED. (a) The board may provide, using funds appropriated for that purpose and in accordance with this subchapter and board rules, assistance in the repayment of student loans for persons who apply and qualify for the assistance.

(b) The provision of financial assistance in the repayment of student loans under this subchapter promotes a public purpose.

Sec. 61.9852. ELIGIBILITY. To be eligible to receive repayment assistance, a child protective services caseworker must:

(1) apply to the board; and

(2) have been employed for at least one year as, and be currently employed full-time as, a direct delivery caseworker at the Department of Family and Protective Services.

Sec. 61.9853. AMOUNT OF REPAYMENT ASSISTANCE; LIMITATION.

(a) For each year that a child protective services caseworker is employed full-time and serves as a direct delivery caseworker at

1 the Department of Family and Protective Services, the caseworker  
2 may receive repayment assistance under this subchapter in an amount  
3 not to exceed \$5,000.

4 (b) A child protective services caseworker may not receive  
5 repayment assistance under this subchapter for more than four  
6 years.

7 (c) If money will not be sufficient to provide repayment  
8 assistance to each eligible applicant, the board shall award  
9 repayment assistance to eligible applicants by prioritizing awards  
10 to applicants employed in regions of this state experiencing the  
11 highest turnover.

12 Sec. 61.9854. ELIGIBLE LOANS. (a) The board may provide  
13 repayment assistance for the repayment of any student loan for  
14 education at a public or private institution of higher education,  
15 including loans for undergraduate and graduate education, issued  
16 through any lender.

17 (b) The board may not provide repayment assistance for a  
18 student loan that is in default at the time of the caseworker's  
19 application.

20 Sec. 61.9855. REPAYMENT. (a) The board shall deliver any  
21 repayment assistance made under this subchapter in a lump sum  
22 directly to the lender and in accordance with any applicable  
23 federal law.

24 (b) Repayment assistance received under this subchapter may  
25 be applied to the principal amount of the loan and to interest that  
26 accrues.

27 Sec. 61.9856. ADVISORY COMMITTEE. The board may appoint an

1 advisory committee from outside the board's membership to assist  
2 the board in performing its duties under this subchapter.

3 Sec. 61.9857. FUNDING. (a) The repayment assistance  
4 program established by this subchapter is funded from the child  
5 protective services caseworker student loan assistance trust fund.  
6 The trust fund is established outside the treasury and is  
7 administered by the comptroller. Money in the trust fund may be  
8 spent without appropriation and only to fund the program. Interest  
9 and income from the assets of the trust fund shall be credited to  
10 and deposited in the trust fund.

11 (b) The board may solicit and accept gifts, grants, and  
12 donations from any public or private source for the purposes of this  
13 subchapter and shall deposit money accepted under this subsection  
14 to the credit of the trust fund.

15 (c) The legislature may appropriate money to the trust fund.

16 Sec. 61.9858. RULES. (a) The board shall adopt rules  
17 necessary for the administration of this subchapter, including a  
18 rule that establishes the amount of repayment assistance awarded to  
19 a caseworker each year.

20 (b) The board shall distribute to each institution of higher  
21 education, the Department of Family and Protective Services, and  
22 appropriate professional associations copies of the rules adopted  
23 under this section and pertinent information in this subchapter.

24 SECTION 2. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board  
25 shall adopt the rules for the repayment assistance program under  
26 Subchapter II, Chapter 61, Education Code, as added by this Act, not  
27 later than December 1, 2013.

1 SECTION 3. This Act takes effect September 1, 2013.