

By: Zaffirini

S.B. No. 1226

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

1
2 relating to the establishment of an employment-first policy and
3 task force that promote opportunities for individuals with
4 disabilities to earn a living wage with competitive employment.

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

6 SECTION 1. Subchapter D, Chapter 117, Human Resources Code,
7 is amended by adding Section 117.075 to read as follows:

8 Sec. 117.075. EMPLOYMENT-FIRST POLICY AND TASK FORCE. (a)

9 The department shall adopt and implement an employment-first policy
10 stating that earning a living wage with competitive employment in
11 the general workforce is the first and preferred outcome of all
12 publicly funded services provided to working-age individuals with
13 disabilities. The policy must contain provisions that ensure:

14 (1) that individuals, particularly secondary and
15 postsecondary students, with disabilities understand the
16 importance of, and are given the opportunity to explore options
17 for, further training, including graduate and postgraduate
18 training, as a pathway to employment;

19 (2) the availability and accessibility of
20 individualized training and support in an individual's preferred
21 employment;

22 (3) the availability and accessibility of resources
23 necessary to enable an individual to understand the effect of
24 earned income on the individual's public benefits; and

1 (4) that competitive employment, while being the first
2 and preferred outcome, is not the only method of securing and
3 maintaining necessary health care and support for individuals with
4 disabilities.

5 (b) The department, in consultation with the executive
6 commissioner, shall establish an interagency employment-first task
7 force that will work to ensure that individuals with disabilities
8 are able to obtain competitive employment and are held to the same
9 employment standards, responsibilities, and expectations as any
10 other working-age adult. The department shall appoint as many
11 members to the task force as the department considers necessary to
12 complete the task force's purposes.

13 (c) The task force shall:

14 (1) design an education and outreach process targeted
15 at individuals with disabilities, families, agencies, and service
16 provider staff that is aimed at raising expectations of the success
17 of individuals with disabilities in integrated, individualized,
18 and competitive employment;

19 (2) develop recommendations for policy and procedure
20 changes that are necessary to allow the employment-first policy
21 described under Subsection (a) to be fully implemented; and

22 (3) produce a report to be provided to the department
23 and the executive commissioner that estimates the reduction in
24 publicly funded services that can be accomplished by implementation
25 of the employment-first policy described under Subsection (a).

26 SECTION 2. Not later than September 1, 2014, the Department
27 of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services shall adopt and implement

1 the employment-first policy and appoint the employment-first task
2 force described under Section 117.075, Human Resources Code, as
3 added by this Act.

4 SECTION 3. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives
5 a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as
6 provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this
7 Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this
8 Act takes effect September 1, 2013.