

By: Patrick

S.B. No. 1720

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

1
2 relating to the Texas Teach Corps Loan Repayment Assistance Program
3 for undergraduate students who agree to teach in school districts
4 in this state that have shortages of teachers in mathematics or
5 science.

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

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

9 SUBCHAPTER II. TEXAS TEACH CORPS STUDENT LOAN REPAYMENT ASSISTANCE
10 PROGRAM FOR MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE CLASSROOM TEACHERS

11 Sec. 61.9831. LOAN REPAYMENT ASSISTANCE AUTHORIZED. The
12 board shall provide, in accordance with this subchapter and board
13 rules, assistance in the repayment of eligible student loans for
14 eligible undergraduate students who agree to teach mathematics or
15 science for a specified period in school districts in this state
16 that are determined by the Texas Education Agency to have shortages
17 of teachers in mathematics or science.

18 Sec. 61.9832. ELIGIBILITY; AGREEMENT REQUIREMENTS. (a) To
19 be eligible to receive loan repayment assistance under this
20 subchapter, a person must:

21 (1) apply for the loan repayment assistance in the
22 manner prescribed by the board;

23 (2) have graduated from high school in this state;

24 (3) be currently enrolled in an educator preparation

1 program accredited by the State Board for Educator Certification
2 that is provided by an institution of higher education or by a
3 private or independent institution of higher education in this
4 state;

5 (4) have a cumulative grade point average of at least
6 2.75 on a four-point scale or the equivalent;

7 (5) enter into an agreement with the board providing
8 that:

9 (A) the person will earn a baccalaureate degree
10 through completion of an educator preparation program described by
11 Subdivision (3);

12 (B) the person will graduate with a cumulative
13 grade point average of at least 2.75 on a four-point scale or the
14 equivalent;

15 (C) the person will obtain, within the period
16 prescribed by board rule, appropriate certification under
17 Subchapter B, Chapter 21, to teach mathematics or science in a
18 public school in this state;

19 (D) beginning with the first school year that
20 begins after the date the person obtains the appropriate
21 certification described by Paragraph (C), the person will accept an
22 offer of full-time employment to teach mathematics or science, as
23 applicable based on the person's certification, in a school
24 district in this state selected by the person from among districts
25 determined by the Texas Education Agency to have shortages of
26 teachers in that subject for that first school year for which the
27 person is accepting employment;

1 (E) the person will complete four consecutive
2 years of employment as a full-time classroom teacher in a district
3 described by Paragraph (D) whose primary duty is to teach
4 mathematics or science, as applicable, based on the person's
5 certification;

6 (F) beginning with the school year immediately
7 following the last of the four consecutive school years described
8 by Paragraph (E), the person will complete four additional
9 consecutive school years teaching in any public school in this
10 state; and

11 (G) the person acknowledges the conditional
12 nature of the loan repayment assistance;

13 (6) comply with any other requirement adopted by the
14 board under this subchapter; and

15 (7) sign a promissory note acknowledging the
16 conditional nature of the repayment assistance received and
17 promising to repay any unforgiven amount of the loan, including
18 accrued interest, and reasonable collection costs if the person
19 does not satisfy the applicable conditions and is not excused from
20 the repayment obligation in accordance with law.

21 (b) Except as provided by Section 61.9833, for the first
22 school year of employment and each following consecutive school
23 year of employment, as described by Subsections (a)(5)(D), (E), and
24 (F), not to exceed a total of eight years, the board may provide
25 assistance for the repayment of one-half of one eligible loan,
26 including the accrued interest on the eligible loan, of an eligible
27 person. Subject to the availability of funding under Section

1 61.9836 and except as otherwise provided by this subsection, the
2 amount of an assistance payment provided under this subsection in
3 any year to an eligible person is \$5,000. The board shall increase
4 that amount as necessary to adjust for inflation or, as determined
5 by the board, on the basis of other relevant considerations. The
6 board shall reduce the amount of a single assistance payment or
7 refrain from making an assistance payment to an eligible person as
8 necessary to avoid making total payments under this subsection to
9 the person in an amount greater than the total amount of principal
10 and interest due on the person's eligible loans.

11 (c) For purposes of this subchapter, whether a school
12 district is determined to have a shortage of mathematics or science
13 teachers for a school year is based on a determination made by the
14 Texas Education Agency during the preceding school year. Not later
15 than April 1 of each school year, the Texas Education Agency shall
16 determine which school districts in this state have a shortage of
17 mathematics or science teachers during that school year and shall
18 provide that information to the board and to each educator
19 preparation program in this state accredited by the State Board for
20 Educator Certification.

21 (d) For purposes of Subsection (a)(5)(E), if a person is
22 employed as a teacher in a school district determined to have a
23 shortage of teachers in mathematics or science for the first year of
24 employment, each subsequent year of continuous employment as a
25 teacher in that district is considered to be employment in a
26 district determined to have such a shortage of teachers in that
27 subject in that subsequent year, regardless of whether the Texas

1 Education Agency determined that the district had a shortage of
2 teachers in that subject for that year.

3 (e) To satisfy the teaching obligation prescribed by an
4 agreement under this section, a person must teach mathematics or
5 science courses for not less than an average of four hours each
6 school day.

7 (f) Except as provided by Subsection (g), a student may use
8 the repayment assistance under this subchapter only to pay tuition
9 and the cost of books and supplies for a semester credit hour that
10 is required for completion of the educator preparation program in
11 which the student is enrolled.

12 (g) A student may not use the repayment assistance under
13 this subchapter to pay for living expenses unless the student has a
14 household income not greater than 200 percent of the income
15 guidelines necessary to qualify for the national free or
16 reduced-price lunch program established under 42 U.S.C. Section
17 1751 et seq. at the time of application for repayment assistance.

18 Sec. 61.9833. EXCEPTION TO CONSECUTIVE YEARS OF EMPLOYMENT
19 REQUIREMENT. The board shall excuse an otherwise eligible person
20 from the requirement imposed by Sections 61.9832(a)(5)(E) and (F)
21 that the employment be performed in consecutive years if the break
22 in employment is a result of the person's:

23 (1) full-time enrollment in a course of study related
24 to the field of teaching that is approved by the State Board for
25 Educator Certification and provided by an institution of higher
26 education or by a private or independent institution of higher
27 education in this state;

1 (2) service on active duty as a member of the armed
2 forces of the United States, including as a member of a reserve or
3 National Guard unit called for active duty;

4 (3) temporary total disability for a period of not
5 more than 36 months as established by the affidavit of a qualified
6 physician;

7 (4) inability to secure employment as required by
8 Section 61.9832 for a period not to exceed 12 months, because of
9 care required by a disabled spouse or child;

10 (5) inability, despite reasonable efforts, to secure,
11 for a single period not to exceed 12 months, employment as required
12 by Section 61.9832; or

13 (6) satisfaction of the provisions of any other
14 exception adopted by the board for purposes of this section.

15 Sec. 61.9834. ELIGIBLE LOANS. (a) The board may provide
16 under this subchapter repayment assistance for the repayment of any
17 student loan that:

18 (1) is for education at a public or private
19 institution of higher education; and

20 (2) is received by an eligible person through an
21 eligible lender.

22 (b) If the loan is not a state or federal guaranteed student
23 loan, the note or other writing governing the terms of the loan must
24 require the loan proceeds to be used for expenses incurred by a
25 person in attending a postsecondary educational institution.

26 (c) The board may not provide loan repayment assistance
27 under this subchapter for a student loan that is in default at the

1 time of the person's application for repayment assistance.

2 Sec. 61.9835. PAYMENT OF ASSISTANCE. (a) The board shall
3 pay any loan repayment assistance under this subchapter in a lump
4 sum:

5 (1) payable to both the holder of the loan and the
6 eligible person; or

7 (2) delivered on the eligible person's behalf directly
8 to the holder of the loan.

9 (b) Loan repayment assistance provided under this
10 subchapter may be applied to any amount due on the loan.

11 (c) Each fiscal biennium, the board shall attempt to
12 allocate all money available to the board for the purpose of
13 providing loan repayment assistance under this subchapter.

14 Sec. 61.9836. MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE TEACHER INVESTMENT
15 FUND. (a) In this section, "fund" means the mathematics and
16 science teacher investment fund.

17 (b) The fund is a dedicated account in the general revenue
18 fund and consists of:

19 (1) appropriations of money to the fund by the
20 legislature;

21 (2) gifts, grants, and other donations received for
22 the fund; and

23 (3) interest and other earnings from the investment of
24 the fund.

25 (c) The fund may be used only to provide repayment
26 assistance for the repayment of loans eligible under Section
27 61.9834, including related administrative costs.

1 (d) The fund is exempt from the application of Sections
2 403.095 and 404.071, Government Code.

3 (e) The board may solicit and accept grants, gifts, or
4 donations from any public or private entity for the purposes of this
5 subchapter. All money received under this subchapter shall be
6 deposited in the fund.

7 Sec. 61.9837. AMOUNT OF LOAN REPAYMENT ASSISTANCE. (a) The
8 total amount of loan repayment assistance paid by the board under
9 this subchapter may not exceed the total amount of money available
10 in the fund under Section 61.9836 and any other money that the board
11 is legally authorized to use for purposes of this subchapter.

12 (b) Not more than 4,000 eligible persons may be provided
13 loan repayment assistance in the amount authorized under this
14 subchapter in any school year.

15 (b-1) This subsection expires January 1, 2020.
16 Notwithstanding Subsection (b), not more than the following number
17 of eligible persons may be provided loan repayment assistance in
18 the amount authorized under this subchapter in the specified school
19 year:

20 (1) in the 2016-2017 school year, not more than 1,000
21 eligible persons may be provided loan repayment assistance;

22 (2) in the 2017-2018 school year, not more than 2,000
23 eligible persons may be provided loan repayment assistance; and

24 (3) in the 2018-2019 school year, not more than 3,000
25 eligible persons may be provided loan repayment assistance.

26 (c) If in any year the amount of money available for loan
27 repayment assistance under this subchapter is insufficient to

1 provide loan repayment assistance to each eligible applicant or if
2 there are more eligible applicants than the number authorized by
3 this section, the board shall establish criteria to determine which
4 eligible applicants will be provided repayment assistance as the
5 board determines appropriate to further the purposes of this
6 subchapter.

7 Sec. 61.9838. RULES. The board shall:

8 (1) adopt rules necessary for the administration of
9 this subchapter, including a rule providing for the manner in which
10 a person may apply for loan repayment assistance; and

11 (2) distribute to each educator preparation program
12 approved by the State Board for Educator Certification offered by
13 an institution of higher education or by a private or independent
14 institution of higher education in this state a copy of the rules
15 adopted under this section.

16 SECTION 2. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
17 shall begin providing loan repayment assistance under Subchapter
18 II, Chapter 61, Education Code, as added by this Act, for eligible
19 persons teaching in the 2016-2017 school year.

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