

By: Hernandez

H.B. No. 2517

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to the establishment of the Texas Promise Scholarship Program for certain students at two-year public institutions of higher education.

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

SECTION 1. Chapter 56, Education Code, is amended by adding Subchapter T to read as follows:

SUBCHAPTER T. TEXAS PROMISE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Sec. 56.521. DEFINITIONS. In this subchapter:

(1) "Coordinating board" means the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

(2) "Eligible institution" means:

(A) a public junior college;

(B) a public technical institute; or

(C) a public state college.

(3) "Institution of higher education," "public junior college," "public technical institute," and "public state college" have the meanings assigned by Section 61.003.

(4) "Program" means the Texas Promise Scholarship Program established under this subchapter.

Sec. 56.522. PROGRAM PURPOSE. The purpose of the Texas Promise Scholarship Program is to provide assistance in the payment of tuition and mandatory fees to enable eligible students to attend two-year institutions of higher education.

1 Sec. 56.523. ADMINISTRATION OF PROGRAM; AWARD OF
2 SCHOLARSHIP. (a) The coordinating board shall administer the
3 program and adopt any rules necessary to implement the program or
4 this subchapter. The coordinating board shall consult with the
5 student financial aid officers of eligible institutions in
6 developing the rules.

7 (b) The coordinating board shall award scholarships to
8 eligible students under the program. In determining who should
9 receive a scholarship under the program, the coordinating board
10 shall give highest priority to awarding scholarships to students
11 who demonstrate the greatest financial need.

12 (c) An eligible institution shall provide to a student who
13 receives a scholarship under the program for a semester or other
14 academic term a credit in the amount of the scholarship, to be
15 applied toward the payment of tuition and mandatory fees charged by
16 the institution for that semester or term.

17 Sec. 56.524. INITIAL ELIGIBILITY FOR SCHOLARSHIP. (a) To
18 be eligible initially for a scholarship under the program, a person
19 must:

20 (1) be a resident of this state as determined by
21 coordinating board rules;

22 (2) meet financial need requirements as defined by the
23 coordinating board;

24 (3) be enrolled in an associate degree or certificate
25 program at an eligible institution;

26 (4) be enrolled as an entering student for at least
27 one-half of a full course load for an entering student in the

1 associate degree or certificate program, as determined by the
2 coordinating board;

3 (5) have applied for any available financial aid or
4 assistance; and

5 (6) comply with any additional nonacademic
6 requirement adopted by the coordinating board under this
7 subchapter.

8 (b) A person is not eligible to receive a scholarship under
9 the program if the person has been convicted of a felony or an
10 offense under Chapter 481, Health and Safety Code (Texas Controlled
11 Substances Act), or under the law of another jurisdiction involving
12 a controlled substance as defined by Chapter 481, Health and Safety
13 Code, unless the person has met the other applicable eligibility
14 requirements under the program and has:

15 (1) received a certificate of discharge by the Texas
16 Department of Criminal Justice or a correctional facility or
17 completed a period of probation ordered by a court, and at least two
18 years have elapsed from the date of the receipt or completion; or

19 (2) been pardoned, had the record of the offense
20 expunged from the person's record, or otherwise been released from
21 the resulting ineligibility to receive a scholarship under the
22 program.

23 (c) A person is not eligible to receive a scholarship under
24 the program if the person has been granted an associate or
25 baccalaureate degree.

26 (d) A person may not receive a scholarship under the program
27 for more than 75 semester credit hours or the equivalent.

1 (e) A person's eligibility for a scholarship under the
2 program ends on the third anniversary of the initial award of a
3 scholarship under the program to the person and the person's
4 enrollment in an eligible institution.

5 Sec. 56.525. CONTINUING ELIGIBILITY AND ACADEMIC
6 PERFORMANCE REQUIREMENTS. (a) After initially qualifying for a
7 scholarship under the program, a person may continue to receive a
8 scholarship under the program during each semester or term in which
9 the person is enrolled at an eligible institution only if the
10 person:

11 (1) meets financial need requirements as defined by
12 the coordinating board;

13 (2) is enrolled in an associate degree or certificate
14 program at an eligible institution;

15 (3) is enrolled for at least one-half of a full course
16 load for a student in an associate degree or certificate program, as
17 determined by the coordinating board;

18 (4) makes satisfactory academic progress toward an
19 associate degree or certificate; and

20 (5) complies with any additional nonacademic
21 requirement adopted by the coordinating board.

22 (b) A person is not eligible to continue to receive a
23 scholarship under this section if the person has been convicted of a
24 felony or an offense under Chapter 481, Health and Safety Code
25 (Texas Controlled Substances Act), or under the law of another
26 jurisdiction involving a controlled substance as defined by Chapter
27 481, Health and Safety Code, unless the person has met the other

1 applicable eligibility requirements under this subchapter and has:

2 (1) received a certificate of discharge by the Texas
3 Department of Criminal Justice or a correctional facility or
4 completed a period of probation ordered by a court, and at least two
5 years have elapsed from the date of the receipt or completion; or

6 (2) been pardoned, had the record of the offense
7 expunged from the person's record, or otherwise been released from
8 the resulting ineligibility to receive a scholarship under the
9 program.

10 (c) If a person fails to meet any of the requirements of
11 Subsection (a) after the completion of any semester or term, the
12 person may not receive a scholarship under the program during the
13 next semester or term in which the person enrolls. A person may
14 become eligible to receive a scholarship under the program in a
15 subsequent semester or term if the person:

16 (1) completes a semester or term during which the
17 student is not eligible for a scholarship; and

18 (2) meets all the requirements of Subsection (a).

19 (d) For the purpose of this section, a person makes
20 satisfactory academic progress toward an associate degree or
21 certificate only if:

22 (1) in the person's first academic year, the person
23 meets the satisfactory academic progress requirements of the
24 institution at which the person is enrolled; and

25 (2) in the subsequent academic year, the person:

26 (A) completes at least 75 percent of the semester
27 credit hours attempted in the student's most recent academic year;

1 and

2 (B) has earned an overall grade point average of
3 at least 2.5 on a four-point scale or the equivalent on course work
4 previously attempted at institutions of higher education.

5 (e) A person who is eligible to receive a scholarship under
6 the program continues to remain eligible to receive the scholarship
7 if the person enrolls in or transfers to another eligible
8 institution.

9 (f) The coordinating board shall adopt rules to allow a
10 person who is otherwise eligible to receive a scholarship under the
11 program, in the event of a hardship or for other good cause shown,
12 including a showing of a severe illness or other debilitating
13 condition that may affect the person's academic performance or that
14 the person is responsible for the care of a sick, injured, or needy
15 person and that the person's provision of care may affect the
16 person's academic performance, to receive a scholarship under the
17 program:

18 (1) while enrolled in a number of semester credit
19 hours that is less than the number of semester credit hours required
20 under Subsection (a)(3); or

21 (2) if the student's grade point average or completion
22 rate falls below the satisfactory academic progress requirements of
23 Subsection (d).

24 Sec. 56.526. SCHOLARSHIP USE. A scholarship awarded under
25 the program may be applied only to the payment of tuition and
26 mandatory fees at an eligible institution.

27 Sec. 56.527. SCHOLARSHIP AMOUNT. (a) The amount of a

1 scholarship awarded to an eligible student under the program for a
2 semester or other academic term in which the student is enrolled at
3 an eligible institution is an amount not to exceed the difference
4 between the amount of tuition and mandatory fees charged to the
5 student by the institution for that semester or term and the amount
6 of any other gift aid, including state or federal grants or
7 scholarships, awarded to the student for that semester or term.

8 (b) A scholarship may not be awarded under the program to an
9 eligible student for a semester or other academic term until any
10 other gift aid for which the student is eligible has been awarded to
11 the student and the student's unmet financial need has been
12 established for purposes of determining the appropriate amount of
13 the student's scholarship under Subsection (a).

14 (c) The coordinating board shall issue to each eligible
15 student a certificate indicating the amount of the scholarship
16 awarded to the student.

17 Sec. 56.528. NOTIFICATION OF PROGRAM; RESPONSIBILITIES OF
18 SCHOOL DISTRICTS. (a) The coordinating board, in consultation
19 with all eligible institutions, shall prepare materials designed to
20 inform prospective students, their parents, and high school
21 counselors about the program and eligibility for a scholarship
22 under the program. The coordinating board shall distribute to each
23 eligible institution and to each school district a copy of the
24 materials prepared under this section.

25 (b) Each school district shall notify its high school
26 students, those students' teachers and school counselors, and those
27 students' parents or guardians of the program and the eligibility

1 requirements of the program.

2 SECTION 2. (a) The Texas Higher Education Coordinating
3 Board shall adopt rules to administer Subchapter T, Chapter 56,
4 Education Code, as added by this Act, as soon as practicable after
5 the effective date of this Act. For that purpose, the coordinating
6 board may adopt the initial rules in the manner provided by law for
7 emergency rules.

8 (b) The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board shall
9 begin awarding scholarships under Subchapter T, Chapter 56,
10 Education Code, as added by this Act, for the first academic year
11 for which money is appropriated for that purpose, except that the
12 coordinating board may not award scholarships under that subchapter
13 for an academic year before the 2016-2017 academic year.

14 SECTION 3. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives
15 a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as
16 provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this
17 Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this
18 Act takes effect September 1, 2015.