

By: Hernandez

H.B. No. 1947

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

1 AN ACT

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

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

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

8 SUBCHAPTER T. TEXAS PROMISE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

9 Sec. 56.521. DEFINITIONS. In this subchapter:

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

12 (2) "Eligible institution" means:

13 (A) a public junior college;

14 (B) a public technical institute; or

15 (C) a public state college.

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

19 (4) "Participating institution" means an eligible
20 institution that elects to participate in the program under Section
21 56.524.

22 (5) "Program" means the Texas Promise Scholarship
23 Program established under this subchapter.

24 Sec. 56.522. PROGRAM. The Texas Promise Scholarship

1 Program is an optional program under which participating two-year
2 institutions of higher education may provide assistance in the
3 payment of tuition and mandatory fees to enable eligible students
4 to attend those institutions.

5 Sec. 56.523. ADMINISTRATION OF PROGRAM. The coordinating
6 board shall administer the program and adopt any rules necessary to
7 implement the program or this subchapter. The coordinating board
8 shall consult with the student financial aid officers of eligible
9 institutions in developing the rules.

10 Sec. 56.524. ELECTION TO PARTICIPATE; AWARD OF SCHOLARSHIP.

11 (a) An eligible institution may elect to participate in the program
12 by notifying the coordinating board of the institution's election.

13 (b) From money available for the purpose, each
14 participating institution shall award scholarships to eligible
15 students under the program. In determining who should receive a
16 scholarship under the program, the institution may give priority to
17 awarding scholarships to students in any major or certificate or
18 degree program designated by the institution.

19 Sec. 56.525. INITIAL ELIGIBILITY FOR SCHOLARSHIP. (a) To
20 be eligible initially for a scholarship under the program, a person
21 must:

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

24 (2) meet financial need requirements as defined by the
25 coordinating board;

26 (3) be enrolled in an associate degree or certificate
27 program at a participating institution;

1 (4) be enrolled as an entering student for at least
2 one-half of a full course load for an entering student in the
3 associate degree or certificate program, as determined by the
4 coordinating board;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

7 Sec. 56.526. CONTINUING ELIGIBILITY AND ACADEMIC
8 PERFORMANCE REQUIREMENTS. (a) After initially qualifying for a
9 scholarship under the program, a person may continue to receive a
10 scholarship under the program during each semester or term in which
11 the person is enrolled at a participating institution only if the
12 person:

13 (1) meets financial need requirements as defined by
14 the coordinating board;

15 (2) is enrolled in an associate degree or certificate
16 program at a participating institution;

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

20 (4) makes satisfactory academic progress toward an
21 associate degree or certificate; and

22 (5) complies with any additional nonacademic
23 requirement adopted by the coordinating board.

24 (b) A person is not eligible to continue to receive a
25 scholarship under this section if the person has been convicted of a
26 felony or an offense under Chapter 481, Health and Safety Code, or
27 under the law of another jurisdiction involving a controlled

1 substance as defined by Chapter 481, Health and Safety Code, unless
2 the person has met the other applicable eligibility requirements
3 under the program and has:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 (A) completes at least 75 percent of the semester
2 credit hours attempted in the student's most recent academic year;
3 and

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

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

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

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

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

26 Sec. 56.527. SCHOLARSHIP USE. A scholarship awarded by a
27 participating institution under the program may be applied only to

1 the payment of tuition and mandatory fees at the institution.

2 Sec. 56.528. SCHOLARSHIP AMOUNT. (a) The amount of a
3 scholarship awarded by a participating institution to an eligible
4 student under the program for a semester or other academic term in
5 which the student is enrolled at the institution may not exceed the
6 difference between the amount of tuition and mandatory fees charged
7 to the student by the institution for that semester or term and the
8 amount of any other gift aid, including state or federal grants or
9 scholarships, awarded to the student for that semester or term.

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

16 Sec. 56.529. NOTIFICATION OF PROGRAM; RESPONSIBILITIES OF
17 SCHOOL DISTRICTS. (a) The coordinating board, in consultation
18 with all participating institutions, shall prepare materials
19 designed to inform prospective students, their parents, and high
20 school counselors about the program, the institutions
21 participating in 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, the institutions

1 participating in the program, and the eligibility requirements of
2 the program.

3 Sec. 56.530. GIFTS, GRANTS, AND DONATIONS. In addition to
4 other money appropriated by the legislature, each participating
5 institution may solicit, accept, and spend gifts, grants, and
6 donations from any public or private source for the purposes of the
7 program.

8 SECTION 2. (a) The Texas Higher Education Coordinating
9 Board shall adopt rules to administer Subchapter T, Chapter 56,
10 Education Code, as added by this Act, as soon as practicable after
11 the effective date of this Act.

12 (b) Each two-year public institution of higher education
13 that elects to participate in the Texas Promise Scholarship Program
14 established under Subchapter T, Chapter 56, Education Code, as
15 added by this Act, shall begin awarding scholarships under that
16 subchapter for the first academic year for which money is available
17 for that purpose, except that an institution may not award
18 scholarships under that subchapter for an academic year before the
19 2018-2019 academic 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, 2017.