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By:  Raney H.B. No. 2879

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to a competitive grant program to fund promotion of early literacy programs in certain communities in this state.

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

SECTION 1.  Chapter 73, Education Code, is amended by adding Subchapter J to read as follows:

SUBCHAPTER J. COMPETITIVE GRANT PROGRAM TO PROMOTE EARLY LITERACY

Sec. 73.701.  DEFINITIONS. In this subchapter:

(1)  "Competitive grant program" means the competitive grant program to promote early literacy established under this subchapter.

(2)  "Health care practitioner" has the meaning assigned by Section 112.001, Occupations Code.

(3)  "Health science center" means The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston.

(4)  "Literacy program" means a program to promote early literacy.

Sec. 73.702.  ESTABLISHMENT OF COMPETITIVE GRANT PROGRAM TO PROMOTE EARLY LITERACY. (a) The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston shall establish a competitive grant program to promote early literacy through which the health science center will award grants for the implementation of literacy programs, or the expansion of existing programs, and for the operation of those programs for a period of not less than two years.

(b)  The health science center shall award grants under the program to applicants, including applicants operating existing programs, in a manner that ensures that the literacy programs collectively operate in multiple communities that are geographically distributed throughout this state.

Sec. 73.703.  LITERACY PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS. A literacy program funded through a grant awarded under this subchapter must:

(1)  consult and use as a guide the program model developed by the Reach Out and Read National Center, including any clinical, programmatic, and data collection requirements of that model;

(2)  require that health care practitioners who participate in the literacy program:

(A)  in conjunction with performing well-child examinations, provide books to children and encourage parents to read to their children to develop preliteracy skills;

(B)  maintain waiting rooms that encourage children to read; and

(C)  provide services designed to increase the school readiness of children receiving program services; and

(3)  partner with local adult literacy providers to encourage parent literacy in appropriate circumstances.

Sec. 73.704.  APPLICATION. (a) A public or private entity, including a county, municipality, or other political subdivision of this state, may apply for a grant under this subchapter.

(b)  To apply for a grant, an applicant must submit a written application to the health science center on a form prescribed by the health science center in consultation with the Reach Out and Read National Center.

Sec. 73.705.  LITERACY PROGRAM GUIDELINES. The health science center, with the assistance of the Reach Out and Read National Center, shall publish guidelines for the literacy programs funded under this subchapter. The guidelines may follow the Reach Out and Read national program model standards and guidelines that have been tested and replicated in multiple communities.

Sec. 73.706.  USE OF PROGRAM MONEY. (a) In addition to awarding grants under this subchapter, the health science center may use program money to:

(1)  administer the competitive grant program; and

(2)  purchase or contract to purchase discounted books for use by grant recipients.

(b)  A grant recipient may use grant money awarded under this subchapter only to cover costs related to implementing or expanding and operating a literacy program, including costs related to:

(1)  administering the literacy program;

(2)  training and managing health care practitioners who volunteer to participate in the literacy program; and

(3)  purchasing or contracting to purchase discounted books for use in the literacy program.

Sec. 73.707.  PROGRAM EVALUATION; BIENNIAL COMMITTEE REPORTS. (a)  The health science center, with the assistance of the Reach Out and Read National Center, shall prepare and submit a biennial report, not later than December 1 of each even-numbered year, to the senate committee on education, or its successor, and the house public education committee, or its successor, regarding the grants awarded during the preceding two state fiscal years.

(b)  The report required under Subsection (a) must include:

(1)  the number of health care practitioners who participate in the program;

(2)  the number of children receiving literacy program services as a result of the program; and

(3)  the amount of each grant awarded to a health care practitioner under the program.

(c)  On request, each grant recipient shall timely collect and provide data and any other information required by the health science center to monitor and evaluate the program, including recipient participation in the program, and to prepare the report required by this section.

Sec. 73.708.  COMPETITIVE GRANT PROGRAM FUNDING. (a) The health science center shall actively seek and apply for any available federal money to assist in financing the competitive grant program established under this subchapter.

(b)  The health science center may use appropriated money from the state government and may accept gifts, donations, grants of money, and in-kind contributions from the federal government, local governments, private corporations, or other persons to assist in financing the competitive grant program.

SECTION 2.  The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston shall:

(1)  as soon as practicable, apply for any available federal money to assist in financing the competitive grant program under Subchapter J, Chapter 73, Education Code, as added by this Act, as required by Section 73.708, Education Code, as added by this Act; and

(2)  not later than December 1, 2022, submit a report to the senate committee on education, or its successor, and the house public education committee, or its successor, regarding the implementation and status of the competitive grant program required by Subchapter J, Chapter 73, Education Code, as added by this Act.

SECTION 3.  This Act takes effect September 1, 2019.