

By: Cortez

H.B. No. 998

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to the establishment of the Texas Promise Scholarship Program for certain students at participating 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 public junior college, public technical institute, or public state college, as those terms are defined by Section 61.003.

(3) "Participating institution" means an eligible institution that elects to participate in the program under Section 56.524.

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

Sec. 56.522. PROGRAM. The Texas Promise Scholarship Program is an optional program under which participating two-year institutions of higher education may provide assistance in the payment of tuition and mandatory fees to enable eligible students to attend those institutions.

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

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

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

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

15 Sec. 56.525. INITIAL ELIGIBILITY FOR SCHOLARSHIP. (a) To
16 be eligible initially for a scholarship under the program, a person
17 must:

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

20 (2) meet financial need requirements as defined by the
21 coordinating board;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

26 (e) A person's eligibility for a scholarship under the
27 program ends on the third anniversary of the initial award of a

1 scholarship under the program to the person and the person's
2 enrollment in a participating institution.

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

9 (1) meets financial need requirements as defined by
10 the coordinating board;

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

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

16 (4) makes satisfactory academic progress toward an
17 associate degree or certificate; and

18 (5) complies with any additional nonacademic
19 requirement adopted by the coordinating board.

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

27 (1) received a certificate of discharge by the Texas

1 Department of Criminal Justice or a correctional facility or
2 completed a period of probation ordered by a court, and at least two
3 years have elapsed from the date of the receipt or completion; or
4 (2) been pardoned, had the record of the offense
5 expunged from the person's record, or otherwise been released from
6 the resulting ineligibility to receive a scholarship under the
7 program.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

27 (B) has earned an overall grade point average of

1 at least 2.5 on a four-point scale or the equivalent on course work
2 previously attempted at institutions of higher education.

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

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

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

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

22 Sec. 56.527. SCHOLARSHIP USE. A scholarship awarded by a
23 participating institution under the program may be applied only to
24 the payment of tuition and mandatory fees at the institution.

25 Sec. 56.528. SCHOLARSHIP AMOUNT. (a) The amount of a
26 scholarship awarded by a participating institution to an eligible
27 student under the program for a semester or other academic term in

1 which the student is enrolled at the institution may not exceed the
2 difference between the amount of tuition and mandatory fees charged
3 to the student by the institution for that semester or term and the
4 amount of any other gift aid, including state or federal grants or
5 scholarships, awarded to the student for that semester or term.

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

12 Sec. 56.529. NOTIFICATION OF PROGRAM; RESPONSIBILITIES OF
13 SCHOOL DISTRICTS. (a) The coordinating board, in consultation
14 with all participating institutions, shall prepare materials
15 designed to inform prospective students, their parents, and high
16 school counselors about the program, the institutions
17 participating in the program, and eligibility for a scholarship
18 under the program. The coordinating board shall distribute to each
19 eligible institution and to each school district a copy of the
20 materials prepared under this section.

21 (b) Each school district shall notify its high school
22 students, those students' teachers and school counselors, and those
23 students' parents or guardians of the program, the institutions
24 participating in the program, and the eligibility requirements of
25 the program.

26 Sec. 56.530. GIFTS, GRANTS, AND DONATIONS. In addition to
27 other money appropriated by the legislature, each participating

1 institution may solicit, accept, and spend gifts, grants, and
2 donations from any public or private source for the purposes of the
3 program.

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

8 (b) Each two-year public institution of higher education
9 that elects to participate in the Texas Promise Scholarship Program
10 established under Subchapter T, Chapter 56, Education Code, as
11 added by this Act, shall begin awarding scholarships under that
12 subchapter for the first academic year for which money is available
13 for that purpose, except that an institution may not award
14 scholarships under that subchapter for an academic year before the
15 2020-2021 academic year.

16 SECTION 3. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives
17 a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as
18 provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this
19 Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this
20 Act takes effect September 1, 2019.