

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 1744
By: Guerra
Public Education
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

It has been noted that while one in four Texas students are designated as English learners, there is a shortage of qualified bilingual educators across the state, especially in rural areas. There have been calls to identify promising high school students and incentivize them to become bilingual teachers. H.B. 1744 seeks to address this issue by creating a career and technology education program and financial incentives that encourage high school students to become bilingual teachers.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE IMPACT

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly create a criminal offense, increase the punishment for an existing criminal offense or category of offenses, or change the eligibility of a person for community supervision, parole, or mandatory supervision.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in SECTION 3 of this bill.

ANALYSIS

H.B. 1744 amends the Education Code to require the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) to establish a program to provide financial incentives such as tuition assistance or student loan repayment for the following purposes:

- to assist persons in obtaining certification to teach bilingual education, English as a second language, or Spanish in a public elementary or secondary school in Texas; and
- to facilitate the employment of those persons by a public elementary or secondary school in Texas that has a shortage of teachers certified to teach in those fields.

The bill requires the THECB, in administering the program, to give priority to awarding financial incentives to those eligible persons who demonstrate the greatest financial need. With regard to the program, the bill does the following:

- sets out the eligibility requirements to receive the financial incentives, including entering into a written agreement with the THECB that requires the person to obtain an applicable teaching certification, accept an employment offer to teach in those fields under certain conditions, and teach for at least two school years;
- requires the THECB to award financial incentives such as tuition assistance or student loan repayment to each program participant to assist with the cost of payment of mandatory tuition and fees for courses required to obtain the teaching certification;
- requires a program participant who fails to meet the requirements of the agreement to reimburse the THECB for the amount of any assistance received by the participant;
- requires the THECB by rule to establish hardship exceptions to the reimbursement requirement;
- authorizes the THECB, in addition to money appropriated by the legislature, to solicit and accept gifts, grants, and donations for the purposes of the program; and

- requires the THECB to adopt rules necessary for the administration of the program, including a rule that sets the maximum amount of financial assistance that a person may receive in one year.

H.B. 1744 requires the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to develop a program of study for use in career and technology education programs beginning not later than the 2022-2023 school year that prepares and assists students in pursuing a career teaching bilingual education, English as a second language, or Spanish. The bill requires TEA to post on its website information regarding the program of study and the financial incentive program administered by the THECB to prepare teachers to obtain certification to teach in those fields.

H.B. 1744 requires the information provided by a school counselor about postsecondary education to a student and the student's parent or guardian each year the student is enrolled at the high school level to include information regarding the availability of programs that prepare students for teaching bilingual education, English as a second language, and Spanish, including the program of study developed by TEA and the financial incentive program administered by the THECB. This requirement applies beginning with the 2022-2023 school year.

EFFECTIVE DATE

On passage, or, if the bill does not receive the necessary vote, September 1, 2021.