A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to the establishment by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board of a grant program for regional postsecondary education collaboratives.

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

SECTION 1. Chapter 61, Education Code, is amended by adding Subchapter W to read as follows:

SUBCHAPTER W. REGIONAL POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION COLLABORATIVES GRANT PROGRAM

Sec. 61.931. DEFINITIONS. In this subchapter:

(1) "Low-income student" means a student who is eligible to receive a grant under the federal Pell Grant program.

(2) "Regional postsecondary education collaborative" means a partnership or other collaboration between stakeholders in education, such as school districts, institutions of higher education, employers, and communities, to improve postsecondary educational outcomes in a region of the state.

Sec. 61.932. GRANT PROGRAM. (a) The board shall establish and administer a competitive grant program under which the board awards grants to eligible regional postsecondary education collaboratives to improve postsecondary educational outcomes for low-income students in the state.

(b) In awarding grants under the program, the board shall give priority to eligible regional postsecondary education
collaboratives that:

(1) focus on supporting low-income students; or

(2) have a demonstrated connection to critical workforce fields, as determined by the board.

Sec. 61.933. ELIGIBILITY. To be eligible to receive a grant under this subchapter, a regional postsecondary education collaborative must:

(1) raise a minimum amount of funding from other sources for the collaborative's costs, as established by board rule;

(2) provide, at a minimum, a scholarship to students in an amount that, when combined with other federal or state student financial assistance for which the student is eligible, covers the full cost of tuition and required fees for two academic years at a public junior college;

(3) build partnerships committed to changing postsecondary education systems and improving postsecondary educational outcomes through the use of data, mutual accountability, and engagement between a student and the student's community;

(4) measure the collaborative's success by achievement of increasing postsecondary enrollment and completion at any institution of higher education and career entry for all students the collaborative assists;

(5) provide personalized outreach to students and parents;

(6) provide proactive, holistic supports to assist
students in postsecondary persistence and completion and in
connecting with employers; and

(7) satisfy any additional requirements established
by board rule.

Sec. 61.934. GRANT AMOUNT. (a) A grant awarded to an
eligible regional postsecondary education collaborative under the
program must be made for two sequential academic years and consists
of:

(1) an initial amount at the beginning of each
academic year equal to $1,000 for each low-income student who:
   (A) graduated from high school in the preceding
   school year; and
   (B) enrolls at an institution of higher education
   for that academic year with the assistance of the collaborative;
   and

(2) at the end of the academic year for which the
initial amount under Subdivision (1) is awarded, a bonus for each
student described by Subdivision (1) who:
   (A) persists at an institution of higher
   education, as defined by the board, except that the bonus may be
   awarded only for the number of those students in excess of the
   number of students described by Subdivision (1) who would need to
   persist at an institution of higher education for the students'
   persistence rate to be equal to the statewide persistence rate of
   low-income students at institutions of higher education during the
   2018-2019 academic year; or

   (B) timely completes a certificate or degree
program at an institution of higher education, as provided by
Subsection (d), except that the bonus may be awarded only for the
number of those students in excess of the number of students
described by Subdivision (1) who would need to timely complete a
certificate or degree program at an institution of higher education
for the students' timely completion rate to be equal to the
statewide timely completion rate of low-income students at
institutions of higher education during the 2018-2019 academic
year.

(b) The bonus per student under Subsection (a)(2)(A) is an
amount equal to $25 million divided by the total number of students
who qualify for the bonus.

(c) The bonus per student under Subsection (a)(2)(B) is an
amount equal to $20 million divided by the total number of students
who qualify for the bonus.

(d) For purposes of this section, "timely completion" means
completion of a certificate or degree program within one and
one-half times the number of calendar years generally required to
complete the program, as determined by the board.

Sec. 61.935. GRANT USE. A grant awarded to an eligible
regional postsecondary education collaborative under this
subchapter may be used only for:

(1) staff support for the collaborative;

(2) student services designed to increase
postsecondary enrollment, persistence, and completion;

(3) student financial assistance;

(4) programs that provide training for regional jobs
in high demand that pay a living wage; and
(5) other expenses approved by the board.

Sec. 61.936. REPORTING. (a) Each regional postsecondary education collaborative that receives a grant under this subchapter shall collect and report to the board information regarding postsecondary enrollment, persistence, and completion, disaggregated by semester or term, as required by the board to assist the board in fulfilling its duties under this subchapter.

(b) Not later than December 1 of each year, the board shall submit to the legislature a report on the effectiveness of the grant program established under this subchapter and any recommendations for legislative or other action.

Sec. 61.937. RULES. The board may adopt rules as necessary to implement this subchapter.

Sec. 61.938. FEDERAL FUNDING CONTINGENCY. The board is required to implement the grant program established under this subchapter only if federal funding is provided to the board for that purpose as part of any federal coronavirus disease (COVID-19) relief spending appropriated on or after January 1, 2021. If such funding is not provided for that purpose, the board may, but is not required to, implement the grant program using other money available to the board for that purpose.

SECTION 2. (a) The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board shall adopt rules to administer Subchapter W, Chapter 61, Education Code, as added by this Act, as soon as practicable after the effective date of this Act.

(b) The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board shall
begin awarding grants under Subchapter W, Chapter 61, Education Code, as added by this Act, for the first academic year for which federal funding is appropriated for that purpose.

SECTION 3. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this Act takes effect September 1, 2021.