

By: Zwiener

H.B. No. 4491

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to measures to facilitate the successful completion of degree and certificate programs by certain adult learners at public institutions of higher education.

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

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

SUBCHAPTER R. TEXAS RECOVERY ACT

Sec. 61.801. DEFINITIONS. In this subchapter:

(1) "Adult learner" means a person who:

(A) is at least 25 years of age but not older than 34 years of age; and

(B) within the preceding 48 months, has achieved at least 75 percent completion of a baccalaureate or associate degree or certificate program.

(2) "Texas WORKS internship program" means the Texas Working Off-Campus: Reinforcing Knowledge and Skills (WORKS) Internship Program established under Subchapter E-1, Chapter 56.

Sec. 61.802. TUITION ASSISTANCE GRANT FOR ADULT LEARNERS.

(a) For the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 academic years, the board shall provide to each adult learner enrolled in a baccalaureate or associate degree or certificate program at an institution of higher education a grant for each semester or term in the amount equal to 25 percent of the average statewide amount of tuition and required

1 fees that a resident student enrolled full-time in a baccalaureate
2 or associate degree or certificate program, as applicable, would be
3 charged for that semester or term at the type of institution of
4 higher education at which the adult learner is enrolled.

5 (b) An adult learner receiving a grant under this section
6 may use the money only to pay the cost of tuition or required fees
7 for the baccalaureate or associate degree or certificate program in
8 which the adult learner is enrolled at an institution of higher
9 education.

10 Sec. 61.803. INCENTIVE FUNDING FOR ADULT LEARNERS. (a) For
11 the state fiscal biennium beginning September 1, 2023, the board
12 shall distribute incentive funding to each institution of higher
13 education based on the number of adult learners enrolled at the
14 institution who, during the preceding state fiscal biennium:

15 (1) timely completed:

16 (A) a baccalaureate or associate degree program
17 in accordance with the adult learner's degree plan; or

18 (B) a certificate program, as established by
19 board rule; or

20 (2) received a baccalaureate or associate degree or
21 certificate in a target field, as established by board rule.

22 (b) Subject to the availability of funds, the amount of
23 incentive funding distributed per qualifying adult learner to an
24 institution of higher education under this section for a state
25 fiscal biennium may not be less than the amount of funding provided
26 per student for that biennium for achievement of an equivalent
27 student success measure under Section 61.0593(f), Education Code.

1 Sec. 61.804. FINAL SEMESTER INTERNSHIPS FOR ADULT LEARNERS.

2 (a) For the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 academic years, the board shall
3 collaborate with employers who participate in the Texas WORKS
4 internship program to ensure that:

5 (1) employers give priority in employment under that
6 program to adult learners in the final semester of a baccalaureate
7 or associate degree or certificate program at an institution of
8 higher education; and

9 (2) each adult learner employed through that program
10 during the adult learner's final semester of a baccalaureate or
11 associate degree or certificate program at an institution of higher
12 education receives an additional \$2,500 stipend as part of the
13 adult learner's wages under that program.

14 (b) The board shall certify internships provided through
15 the Texas WORKS internship program through which an adult learner
16 may earn course credit toward the adult learner's baccalaureate or
17 associate degree or certificate program, as applicable.

18 Sec. 61.805. GRAD TX PROGRAM. The board shall establish the
19 Grad TX program in collaboration with institutions of higher
20 education to support the reskilling, upskilling, and high-value
21 degree or certificate program completion of adult learners. The
22 program may include:

23 (1) academic and career advising;

24 (2) assistance with available student financial aid
25 options; and

26 (3) flexible degree or certificate programs designed
27 for adult learners.

1 Sec. 61.806. LIMITATION. (a) The total amount spent under
2 this subchapter may not exceed \$50 million.

3 (b) If the total cost of providing grants, incentive
4 funding, or stipends to all eligible adult learners or institutions
5 of higher education under this subchapter would exceed the amount
6 that may be spent under Subsection (a), the board shall reduce the
7 amount of each grant, incentive funding award, and stipend as
8 necessary to comply with that subsection.

9 Sec. 61.807. GIFTS, GRANTS, AND DONATIONS. The board may
10 accept gifts, grants, and donations from any public or private
11 source for purposes of this subchapter.

12 Sec. 61.808. REPORT. Not later than December 1 of each
13 year, the board shall submit to the governor, the lieutenant
14 governor, and the speaker of the house of representatives a report
15 on the status and effectiveness of the measures established under
16 this subchapter.

17 Sec. 61.809. RULES. The board may adopt rules as necessary
18 to implement this subchapter. In adopting rules, the board shall
19 consult with institutions of higher education, the Texas Workforce
20 Commission, members of the business community, and other relevant
21 stakeholders.

22 Sec. 61.810. EXPIRATION. This subchapter expires September
23 1, 2025.

24 SECTION 2. Not later than December 1, 2022, the Texas Higher
25 Education Coordinating Board shall submit the board's initial
26 report required under Section 61.808, Education Code, as added by
27 this Act.

1 SECTION 3. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board is
2 required to implement a provision of this Act only if the
3 legislature appropriates money specifically for that purpose. If
4 the legislature does not appropriate money specifically for that
5 purpose, the coordinating board may, but is not required to,
6 implement a provision of this Act using other appropriations
7 available for that purpose.

8 SECTION 4. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives
9 a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as
10 provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this
11 Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this
12 Act takes effect September 1, 2021.